

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

The 2022 Edition from WiHTL and The MBS Group



Foreword

It is with great pleasure that we launch the 2022 edition of the Women to Watch and Role Models for Inclusion in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure Index. In the twelve months since the last edition, there has been further volatility and complexity within the wider world. Indeed, the word to describe what we are experiencing is well-captured as 'permacrisis'. Despite so much uncertainty, we have also witnessed the remarkable commitment to improving the career prospects of women within hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL). Leaders in this sector are keeping D&I buoyant within their businesses, and we are delighted to see women flourishing and advancing in their roles.

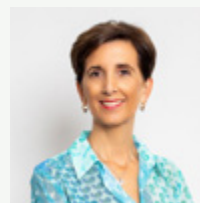
Our recently published Annual Report highlights how female leadership is increasing – albeit at a slower pace than hoped for. These small but positive steps are, in part, thanks to new or updated policies specifically put in place to promote women's progression in the workplace. We also believe that the increasing number of leaders who value the breadth of thought and experiences brought by diverse talent is driving change. These leaders are mobilising resources to raise awareness, educate, provide challenges and support the creation of inclusive workplaces.

This Index shines the spotlight on an array of extraordinary women whose determination and persistence have brought success both commercially and operationally. The women featured have achieved both personal and professional goals. They have distinguished themselves

in their professional fields and set the bar for excellence and achievement. In addition to celebrating their accomplishments, the Index also aims to inspire a new generation of female leaders who will see and pursue the myriad of career opportunities that exist in our sector, and which are open to all.

We have also identified Role Models for Inclusion, individuals who have created a spirit of allyship in supporting inclusion in all its forms across our industry. Passionately advocating change, they give their time and experience to promoting D&I within their organisation through being involved in executive sponsorship, setting up employee network groups, or championing diversity in a broader sense.

The individuals listed in the Index have been through a rigorous selection process undertaken by The MBS Group, and based on a set of specific criteria. I would like to thank all the WiHTL Member Companies that have submitted nominations and Elliott Goldstein and his fantastic team for their ongoing partnership in producing this Index which will be a source of celebration and inspiration to many who work in our industry.



Tea Colaianni

Founder and Chair
WiHTL

Introduction

The MBS Group is once again delighted to present the Women to Watch and Role Models for Inclusion in Hospitality, Travel and Leisure Index, produced in partnership with WiHTL.

This Index was first launched in 2019, at a time when a supposed lack of women leaders was frequently cited as a barrier to progress on diversity and inclusion in hospitality, travel and leisure (HTL). This project was designed to dispel that myth, by celebrating the broad scope of female talent that exists across the sector.

Today, we are proud to have published four Indexes, and to have highlighted hundreds of women who are excelling in their field and proving what's possible for others in HTL. Thinking back to 2019, I can say with confidence that we have achieved our aim.

It has been a real privilege to bring together this year's Index. The women featured have come from all sub-sectors, functions, seniorities, and walks of life, and it has been enlightening to hear the personal and professional stories, lessons learnt, and challenges overcome from such a diverse range of leaders.

This year, alongside the Women to Watch, we are delighted to once again be highlighting senior leaders who are driving change in their organisations. In a sector still recovering from Covid-19, and facing new challenges in a once-in-generation cost-of-living crisis, it is more important than ever that D&I is prioritised at the top of organisations in our sector. Role Models

for Inclusion are executives who are spearheading initiatives, leading by example, and encouraging lasting progress in their business and community.

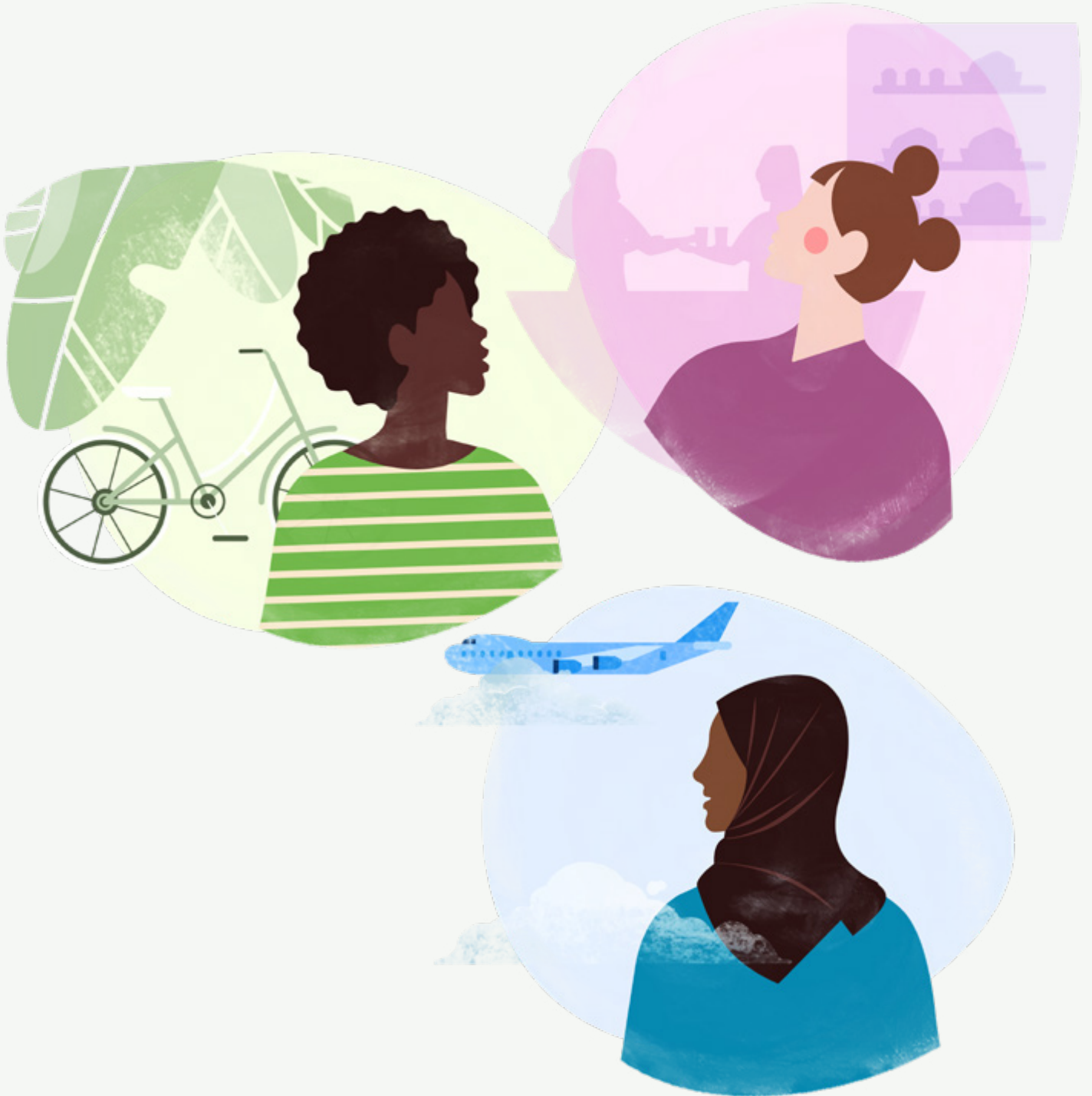
Over the past few years, our sector has become a far more diverse and inclusive place, but there is still a long way to go. Recent research from MBS and WiHTL found that, at the current pace of change, it would take more than eleven years to reach gender parity at Board, executive committee and direct report level. We must not lose focus – and continuing to shine a light on inspiring women in the sector is a critical part of encouraging the next generation of diverse leaders. Encouragingly, 70% of those we spoke to for this publication said that their company has in place a formal mentoring scheme or an initiative to recognise role models.

I would like to thank every person featured in this Index for taking the time to share their story, and to the team at WiHTL who play such an integral role in making our sector a more inclusive place. Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues at The MBS Group for their hard work in bringing this publication together.



Thirza Danielson

Director, Hospitality,
Travel and Leisure
Practice
The MBS Group



Women to Watch

Inspiring female role models from across the industry

Over the past few months, we have sought nominations for distinguished women from the hospitality, travel and leisure sector. These women were nominated and selected because of their 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.



Denise Allen

Company **Westbury Street Holdings** / Job Title **Director of People**



I studied Hotel Management at Brighton College, graduating in 1996 and entering the foodservice sector as a graduate student. I started work in operations at heritage and sporting venues, as well as Central Kitchen where there was high-volume

catering, then I moved into finance.

Realising that I wasn't very good at finance and in fact loved the people aspect of hospitality, I took myself through the process of obtaining my CIPD qualification. I have been in a generalist HR role in hospitality and retail for twenty years, and it has been interesting to see how the HR function has evolved. I particularly enjoy the D&I, wellbeing and talent planning aspects of my role.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Integrity, vision, empowering and fair.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

I have been supporting some brilliant people on the WiHTL Ethnic Future Leaders Programme and my own mentor has encouraged me to participate in reverse mentoring.

What quote inspires you the most?

I have been reading *Becoming* by Michelle

Obama. She wrote: "People who are truly strong lift others up. People who are truly powerful bring others together." This has really resonated with me as we have been coming out of the pandemic. Now more than ever, we must bring our people together and keep them, allowing them to flourish, grow and be represented.

What is your favourite book or film?

My favourite film is *The Colour Purple*, and my favourite book is *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't just follow people. Be prepared to get out of your comfort zone occasionally and have confidence to own a voice.

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

Whilst HR as a profession is highly rewarding, it can be complicated, and I learnt early on that being commercially aware and aligned to business leaders is key to success. You must have their trust and act as their confidant. But you also need to challenge and push them to think differently.

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

Diversity means a lot to me. It's about coming into work, having a voice and feeling supported in being yourself. It's about having a purpose and a sense of belonging. It's about asking and answering uncomfortable questions

around diversity and being open to learning from people around you about their lived experience.

Our organisation is on a journey, like many others, and there is a real commitment and recognition that we must do better in this area. D&I is at the top of our agenda, but we know there is still a lot to do. We have been working with other organisations, particularly WiHTL, to help shape what this looks like for us.

Who is your industry role model?

Wow, I have a lot! There are some business leaders internally that I look up to: Paul Jackson, MD of Searcys/Portico, for how he responded to the pandemic, brought the business back and took the people with him.

Also, Lorraine Copes from Be Inclusive Hospitality, who I had the pleasure of meeting a few weeks ago, for all the work her and her team have done around race and equity in the hospitality sector.

Maria Azcue

Company **Aer Lingus** / Job Title **Head of Transformation Maintenance and Engineering**



Before I had decided which route I wanted to take in my career, I studied Industrial Engineering and Business and Administration degrees at university. When I finished my studies, I wanted to join a consulting company to have the possibility to

work in different industries and companies. That gave me the opportunity to work for International Airlines Group (IAG), one of the world's largest airline groups. Joining IAG was one of the best decisions that I have ever made as I fell in love with the aviation industry! In IAG, I worked in maintenance strategy as well as operations, and I learned so much from the people there. IAG fosters a lot of diversity, and it is so enriching for people in the company. A year ago I decided to take a new challenge and took up the role of Head of Transformation at Aer Lingus working closely with Aer Lingus' CTO, whom I worked with previously in IAG.



that is to go on holiday or to see their loved ones. It is great to feel that we are a part of that.

How is Aer Lingus encouraging women to progress within the sector?

Our CEO and CFO are both women, and I think the best way to promote something is to demonstrate that it is achievable. Having women in leadership roles is so encouraging for other women within the company. Approximately 10% of Aer Lingus pilots are female, which is slightly ahead of airlines around Europe and the company is keen to encourage more women into technical roles. In Maintenance and Engineering, we had our first female graduate engineer join the technical services department a few weeks ago, which is fantastic. We hope to encourage more females into the Engineering department in the future.

How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?

The world after the pandemic is not the same as it was before, and I think that the aviation industry had to reinvent itself. What I am also seeing is that there is an increasing commitment to diversity which is a great step. Maintenance and engineering, for example, was previously very male-dominated but it is fantastic to see that we now have a number of female apprentices. Diversity of all kinds is so important because you can learn so much from working with different people.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

It is important for a leader to be honest and transparent and to empower and motivate their team.

What makes a good industry role model?

Somebody who is confident and can mirror their motivation.

What is the most interesting thing you have seen, read, or heard recently?

I recently listened to a podcast which said "Don't be afraid of problems. Pretend to be the problem of the problem" and I think that is a great attitude to have.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Working on your self-confidence can be difficult, but it is so important to trust yourself and to voice your opinion. Don't be afraid that others in the room may know much more than you – if you are wrong and somebody else knows more, then it provides an opportunity for you to learn!

What is the most rewarding part about working within the HTL sector?

Aviation is an amazing industry. It is so rewarding to see how we are connecting people across the world with others and with different places. When you are in an aircraft, you are able to see the people that are travelling, whether



Sarah Barron

Company **Domino's** / Job Title **Chief Marketing Officer**



Straight out of university, I knew I wanted to be a marketeer, so I searched for the companies with the best training schemes. I started at Boots, moving onto Cadbury as an FMCG marketeer for 12 years. I had many great experiences in local and

global brand marketing in the UK and internationally. My final role was a shift into general management as the MD for the Green & Blacks premium chocolate business. I then had three children (in quick succession!) and decided to set up my own consultancy to be able to continue my career, but also spend time with them when they were young. I worked with many companies including SABMiller, Vodaphone and Costa Coffee in South East Asia, and that's when I developed my passion for the HTL and retail sectors. I then joined Costa Coffee permanently as their Global Chief Growth Officer and spent five wonderful years there. I then moved onto Domino's where I have been for two years enjoying the fast-paced world of retail in the growing F&B category. I will struggle to go back to the brilliant but slightly slower world of FMCG, having tasted this environment.



What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

I enjoy the fast-paced energy of the sector. The customer centric work you do can be tested in an agile way in your own environments, and implemented quickly if successful.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop?

D&I is now a priority in many businesses which is great progress. At Domino's, we have a clear diversity and inclusion policy that we've embedded internally, and communicated externally. We have trained

our leadership team to encourage diversity in all recruitment and talent development and this is already impacting the organisation positively. We want to ensure that everyone is enabled to do their best work at Domino's and that all barriers are removed wherever possible.

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

I love my career and I love working in the retail industry, but I also love being a mum and being with my children. Getting that balance right is hard, but it's very rewarding when you strike it right. I had a fantastic boss at Costa who worked with me to define a way of working that enabled me to be at my best in the office and at home. Inclusion is about removing the barriers that stop somebody doing their best work, regardless of what those barriers may be. I have learnt that this is the most important role of a leader to enable great talent to develop.

“ We need people who think and act differently to challenge the accepted norms, and to drive greater growth for businesses.

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

We need greater diversity in the industry as this has been more limited to date. We need people who think and act differently to challenge the accepted norms, and to drive greater growth for businesses. I would definitely encourage women to consider HTL as it can offer so much opportunity to make a difference often in fast faced, high growth businesses.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Adam Morgan from Eat Big Fish. I still refer back to his early books to help guide me in marketing... focusing on the importance of over committing, sacrificing and entering popular culture

in the pursuit of building brilliant brands.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Courage and integrity.

What is your favourite book?

The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood.

Kay Bartlett

Company **wagamama** / Job Title **Customer Director**



I played hockey for Scotland whilst studying Economics at university. After finishing my studies, I was offered a job in an investment bank. I decided that it wasn't for me and instead, I pursued a career in FMCG. It was only at the point that I went on maternity

leave for the first time that I was inspired to move on to do something different. Hospitality was something that excited me and the wagamama brand was the real draw that prompted me to make the move. I joined as Marketing Director, working on everything from end-to-end marketing communications (both offline and digital) to insights and I am now Customer Director which is part of the Executive Committee.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

Working in an industry in which you are dealing directly with consumers and having the ability to make a positive impact on their lives is so rewarding. I have met some hugely inspiring people within the hospitality sector, and I love how fast paced the industry is. No two days are the same in hospitality and the opportunities are endless.

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

I really hope that in the next five years, it becomes standard that all brands become more sustainable. At wagamama, we now

have a menu which is 50% plant-based and we believe it is important to provide guests with the option to choose excellent plant-based dishes if they wish to do so. We have also recently launched more sustainable packaging removing 330 tonnes of virgin plastic from our supply chain. It is the little steps that you take that make a huge impact and I hope to see more of this within the next five years.

What are you, and wagamama, doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

We have a number of different programmes which focus on providing women with opportunities



to progress regardless of which part of the business they are in or which level they are at. We have just launched a women's leadership programme and female chefs are becoming better represented too. I was 32 when I joined the Executive Committee and I hope that being a young woman in that position may have inspired younger people in the business.

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

Do something because you love it! Working in hospitality doesn't feel like a job for me and it gets me out of bed in the morning. It is so important to find opportunities that you genuinely love being a part of.

QUICKFIRE

What is your favourite book?

Shoe Dog: A Memoire by the Creator of Nike by Phil Knight.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Being genuine and authentic are hugely important qualities.

Who is your industry role model?

My first CEO at wagamama, Emma Woods,

is a great female role model and I'm so lucky to now have Thomas as CEO who inspires and challenges me every day.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again"
– Nelson Mandela.



Luz Batista

Company **Avis Budget Group** / Job Title **Director of Accounting, PTP North America Business Process Owner**



After moving to the US from the Dominican Republic, I had to choose a career and learn English as a second language. My mother and her siblings were all teachers, so I'd always assumed I'd follow in their footsteps. That thought quickly vanished

when I realised I needed to first learn English. At the time, I decided to major in business administration, and I later developed an interest in accounting and finance. My career started with a container shipping company. Those were particularly trying years for me because I discovered how being a member of a minority group added new challenges and barriers to my path.

Things began to take shape at Avis, formerly Cendant, where I started as a staff accountant. Cendant's primary focus, which included a number of brands, was hospitality. I was promoted to Manager, and I realised that leading people was my passion. As I continue to climb my career ladder, I can confirm that leading people is the most rewarding job, but it also carries the most responsibility. Motivating, coaching, fostering a sense of teamwork, collaborating, and pushing for results are the most gratifying tasks. Leading also entails being conscious of diversity and inclusion. Teaching others to value and respect one another's beliefs and opinions requires modelling how to view our differences as opportunities to grow and learn.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Empathy, inspirational and embraces change.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

The Netflix series *From Scratch* is a series about love, family, the hurdles immigrants overcome to make a living. Most importantly, it's about following your passion.

What quote inspires you the most?

I don't know who said it, but my favourite quote is "it's never too late to learn."

What is your favourite book or film?

A Walk in the Clouds is a film about family, traditions, love, and hard work.



What is your experience of role models and role modelling in the sector?

Cynthia Tarantino, my manager at Cendant, was the first person to inspire me in that organisation. Cyndi was fearless and never held back when it came to speaking her mind. She gave me the best piece of advice: always be true to yourself. She pushed me to share my knowledge and suggestions with the team. I also discovered that collaboration was critical to achieving my goals. I was given my next opportunity after Cyndi left the company, and she suggested I take her place. I had to show the hiring manager that I was ready to lead.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't be afraid to speak up when something is unfair or wrong.

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

I've learnt that when a door closes, another – better – door will open.

How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?

How do you think it will change in the future?

I believe HTL has grown to embrace diversity and inclusion. The industry now displays the faces that are achieving and driving success. I think we will continue to bring awareness and fairness for all ethnic groups. It is organisations such as WiHTL that push for change and celebrate representation.



Karin Bissmarck

Company **ODEON Cinemas Group** / Job Title **Operation and Change Manager (IT)**



I first started working in a cinema company nearly 20 years ago. During this time, I had a number of roles including being a projectionist. I loved this role and the people were wonderful and friendly but it was a time when not many women took up these roles.

Throughout my career, I have continued to find myself in male dominated environments having studied engineering and working in IT. I now have a territory role as Operation and Change Manager.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Look for new opportunities! If you have an idea or see a need, don't keep it to yourself. Share it with others and be confident. One of the things I've learnt is, instead of asking what I could do or waiting to be told what to do, come with a suggestion and say how you think it would work and what difference it would make. I also think it is important to find a role that you really enjoy. If you are passionate about something, it really can make all the difference.

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

Essentially, everyone wants to feel included for who you are, a unique human being. I believe my uniqueness shines when I'm surrounded by people who are different to me. An important element of diversity and inclusion is questioning our 'fixed truths' because others view things from completely different angles. The more diverse our teams are, the

more diverse thinking we have which has a positive impact on innovation and how successful we are as a business. Here at ODEON Cinemas Group, diversity and inclusion are really important for us. We make movies better by bringing together all our incredible differences, our different ways of thinking and our passion for cinema.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

Although I work in our support office and not directly in the cinema, we all work for a cinema company. We are encouraged to connect with the cinemas by lending a helping hand a few times a year and I really enjoy doing this. You get to be a part of the guests' experience, whether it's a family trip or a first date. I believe in bringing that atmosphere and hospitality qualities back to the support office. We're all a part of each other's experience and work environment and should do our best to make it positive for everyone.

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

I believe the hospitality sector has always been diverse, not just when you look at the guests who come to us to watch films but also those colleagues who work in the sector. However, when I first started working, we were not diverse across all levels of the business. I believe there is more diversity

across hospitality now and there has definitely been progress, especially in terms of gender and age, but we still have a long way to go in terms of other areas of diversity especially at more senior levels of the business. One thing that has helped us is that we have become part of ODEON Cinemas Group which employs colleagues in nine countries across Europe. This has allowed us to learn from each other's cultures.



QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Listening.

Who is your industry role model?

Dan Ekholm, Business Architect because he brings out the best in people and encourages you to find the best solution for yourself.

What quote inspires you the most?

I've got two. "I'm more unique when I'm surrounded by people who are different to me," and "see a need, fill a need."

What is your favourite book or movie?

Lost in Translation.



Hazel Boyle

Company **The Rank Group Plc** / Job Title **Chief People Officer**



I have always worked in a service-related industry – Burger King and Gleneagles Hotel as a student to healthcare and then into TV and entertainment. I've had HR roles for STV plc, ITN, ITV, advertising and publishing and now have joined The Rank Group

– who have been exciting and entertaining since 1937. It's a brilliant business, with talented, engaged colleagues and a great culture.

I'm a mum and stepmum – which is the best job ever! Juggling both gets the best out of me.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Kit Kemp, who runs Firmdale Hotels. She's a real inspiration. Her sense of style, service, experience, strong work ethic and clear values are all incredibly inspirational.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Integrity, loyalty and honesty.

What's the most interesting thing you have read, seen or heard recently?

I love this quote: "A person who has good thoughts cannot ever be ugly. You can have a wonky nose and a crooked mouth and a double chin and sticky out teeth but if you have good thoughts, they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely" by Roald Dahl, from *The Twits*.

What is your favourite book?

Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus.



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

I'd be working in a similar, service-based industry – entertaining, educating, inspiring or giving joy.

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

My drive and determination have set me up well. I'm not from a privileged background but I have progressed because of my values, work ethic, and by being a good person. I have taken control of my destiny, but also been specific about what I wanted to achieve – I've put in the hours, taken risks and if I can do it anyone can. After 25 years in HR I can now give my time back, I can coach, mentor and advocate equal opportunity and promote tomorrow's women.

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

1) Don't rely on work creating the structure for you to balance your life and personal aspirations. You need to customise and build a structure that works at home too. Work on your 'home contract' – as it's not always modern. Push a little harder to get what

you want, what you need – that might seem unfair, but the more we push, the more the playing field will equal. During the early days, the workplace wasn't as modern as it is now, so you had to be more sharp-elbowed, brush stuff off, and had to be more-thick skinned.

2) You've got to make mistakes along the way so that you can be a better version of yourself.

What has been your experience of role models and role modelling in the sector?

I've worked for some great managers. I always try to lead by example and treat colleagues as I like to be treated. I like to receive and give feedback, coach people, encourage teamwork and let people do their jobs autonomously. Family is important and having balance benefits us at work – so we should remember this... as it's the balance that matters. And work should also be fun... always, so I don't take myself too seriously! Even the not so good experiences I've had have been good as they've allowed me to better myself as a manager and see the negative impact poor leadership / behaviour has on teams and performance.



Lucy Branch

Company **IHG Hotels & Resorts** / Job Title **Director Brand Culture & Service**



In 2010, I finished my A Levels and started an internship with Citroen UK in Digital Marketing and my part-time degree for Business Management. After this, I joined a marketing agency focused on BMW Group and McLaren Automotive, shaping their consumer

branding and advertising. In 2015, I took a year out to complete one year of independent travel starting in India, through Southeast Asia, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and the USA. This was the turning point for me. I knew I wanted to enter the HTL industry to continue to connect to new people, new places and learn from different perspectives.

When I got back, I joined InterContinental's global brand team and have held roles across the brand and marketing organisation in advertising, guest experience and most recently leading the development of Brand Culture and Service. My focus is putting our colleagues, guests and communities at the heart of everything that we do to continue to build a brand which is inclusive for all, invites discovery and creates possibility. I am also an active member of a Lean In Circle, have been a mentor to our brilliant Change 100 2022 intern and most recently joined the Reverse Mentee programme for EFL.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Ask the question – whether that be for an opportunity you want but not sure you are ready for, or to continuously learn and challenge the norm. Your ideas, questions, and voice matter.

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

Most recently it has been a personal challenge which has directly impacted learnings I will take forward in my career. After losing my mum to a short battle with cancer at the start of 2022, the care and support I was shown by my fellow

colleagues has made me put a heightened focus on the people at the heart of everything I do. Prioritising our wellbeing first is non-negotiable.

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

To me, D&I means being able to continuously learn from others. Being trusted by another individual with their story, their differences and their vision is a privilege and it's where I get my energy and inspiration from. IHG Hotels & Resorts creates the space for those connections to be made and for individuals to thrive.



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

Over the past five years in HTL, I have seen the conversation on D&I turn into tangible action with

a clear roadmap of what needs to happen next in place. The openness and transparency from leaders throughout the industry has been refreshing and has created a greater sense of 'we are all in this together', which is making a real difference.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Every one of my amazing InterContinental Hotels & Resorts colleagues.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Honesty, empathy, and curiosity.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

A great podcast shared by my manager when I was struggling with imposter

syndrome recently, WorkLife with Adam Grant: Reese Witherspoon on turning imposter syndrome into confidence.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Behind every strong person is a story that gave them no choice."

What is your favourite book or film?

Charlotte's Web by E. B. White – a book based on unlikely friendship I read often with my mum as a child.

Rosie-Ellis Brothwood

Company **Away Resorts Ltd** / Job Title **General Manager**



I first joined the holiday park industry as a receptionist in 2009 whilst I was studying International Resort Tourism Management at university, and I completely fell in love with it! I worked my way up to Assistant Manager before heading up a Guest Experience

Manager role and progressing to General Manager three years ago. This is the sixth holiday park that I have worked at and it has been fantastic to work around the country, whether that was in Lancashire, the Lake District, Essex or New Forest. There are so many opportunities within this industry and it is very rewarding to be a part of people's memories.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mum is my role model. She brought me up as a single parent and always pushed me to be number one.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

A good leader has the ability to listen, has empathy and gets involved in their team.

What is your favourite film?

Peter Pan.

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

Originally, I wanted to be a vet and I was accepted into veterinary school. I decided that it wasn't going to be for me, so the path of my career completely changed, and I fell in love with the industry that I am in now.

What has been your experience of role models in the sector?

One of my biggest role models in the sector is one of my previous holiday sales managers. She was around 24 when she was in that role and was completely amazing! At the time, holiday parks were quite male-oriented and it was great to see a woman doing so well. It inspired me and made me realise that I could do it too.

What can be done to make the workplace feel inclusive and accommodating?

Away Resorts provides a welcoming and

accommodating workplace. When female colleagues take maternity leave, for example, we allow for flexible working patterns when they return. We are also flexible when it comes to attending antenatal classes – this applies to our male colleagues too. There is a real family feel at holiday parks and it is so important to treat your team how you wish to be treated.

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

You can make your work as fun as possible! No two days are the same in hospitality and it is such a fun environment. I am always excited for the day and to see my team and customers. One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is seeing people fall in love with the industry and seeing them grow and develop within their careers. If you are considering a role in the sector, give it a go!

Nicola Burke

Company **Hilton** / Job Title **Director of Sales Enablement and Meetings Simplified, EMEA**



I've been around the industry all my life because my father and grandparents were both in hotels. That was the only thing I ever wanted to do. I was inspired from a very early age to become a Hotel General Manager.

My first part-time job was in a private hospital's catering department. I was exposed to the buzz of interaction with patients for the first time, and I really enjoyed it. After that, I went to Leeds Polytechnic, which is now Leeds Metropolitan University, to do an HND in hotel management and operational institutions. Through the last placement, I landed at Hilton Hotel in Edinburgh, after a few years there and then the Hilton Warwick in operational and revenue roles, I worked for private hotels and smaller chains to gain a mix of geographic and cultural experiences. In 2000, I returned to Hilton as Regional Revenue Manager and stayed.

I am now Director of Sales Enablement and Meetings Simplified for Europe, Middle East and Africa. My team is responsible for enabling property Sales & GC&E Teams to be successful commercially and in their personal development. We support by communicating existing and creating new tools and assets to support the teams, ensuring consistent alignment with all Commercial and Team member objectives.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industrial role model?

Patricia Page-Champion, Senior Vice President & Global Commercial Director at Hilton, and Nicola Lickfold, Vice President & Commercial Director for Europe at Hilton.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Flexibility, empathy, trust and empowerment.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Lift as you climb."

What do you enjoy the most at work?

One thing that I enjoy the most at work is spotting talent and being able to support individuals as they develop their careers. I always believe that when you go into a role, you should actually try and make yourself redundant! Because if you are leading a team effectively, it shouldn't matter if you disappear on holiday, or you get called out. The cogs should keep turning – people should be enabled, empowered, and motivated to continue without you.

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

I don't think I would have worked in other sectors. I am passionate about the hospitality industry. There are so many options you can explore within – whether it's marketing, customer service, finance, commercial – literally anything. People can find their niche within the hospitality industry. The gift that this industry gives, is the opportunity to jump around and progress swiftly.

How are you encouraging women, and other diverse colleagues, to progress through the sector?

My team and I deliver information to make sure people who receive it feel empowered by their commercial performance and personal development when taking on new opportunities. Post-Covid, we have also been maintaining flexibility for people who want to or have to work from home and making sure supportive measures are in place.

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

I would encourage them to be open-minded – say yes to every opportunity. It is important that people do not need to think that every step on a career ladder needs to be upwards. In my view, every experience is a good experience. You always learn no matter if it's a lateral or upwards move.

Claire Carbone

Company **PizzaExpress** / Job Title **Estates Director**



I studied Urban Estate Management at university because I never wanted a nine-to-five desk job. I wanted to be out there seeing “beyond a desk”. For me, it’s so much more fun and interesting looking up at the built environment, than just down at a screen.

I worked for various companies and then joined a leading firm of national surveyors where I qualified as a Chartered Surveyor – a qualification I am immensely proud of. Through these experiences I was asked to move client side and join PizzaExpress. It has now been fifteen incredible years of working directly for a brand I love and am proud to associate my name with.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

I get a real buzz and sense of fulfilment thinking that the work I do, makes a difference and plays a small part in the customers’ experience. Whilst I don’t make or serve the food and drinks for our customers, if the physical restaurant was not there, in that location, in that condition and with those occupational costs, they wouldn’t be there enjoying our amazing food: that’s how I can make a difference.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in the past few years?

With everything that we as a business and as an industry are doing with WiHTL and similar programmes, there are a lot of changes happening. We’re having conversations about it now whereas going back even a few years, it wasn’t front of mind or high on the agenda across the industry. We have some amazing inspirational female leaders within our business – in high impact roles. Together we’re louder, stronger and bigger.



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

When I was planning my maternity leave, I was a little nervous being out of the business for a year. I was concerned that there would be changes and I could be lost in the numbers. I was worried I would no longer be recognised as a focused, professional and qualified Chartered Surveyor within the business and instead “just a part time property advisor”. I was very wrong indeed. That was nine years ago and since then I’ve reminded myself that if you treat others the way you want to be treated, it will pay dividends. It’s an important reminder that having opportunities

outside of work, for example as a parent or carer, neither decreases your professionalism nor means that you will be forgotten. Just be true to yourself and others.

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

It’s an inclusive industry – for anybody and everybody. It’s also a vibrant, fast-paced, exciting and relatable industry. So, absolutely, get involved in any role you can find in the sector, whether it’s marketing, finance, surveying (my personal favourite!), or communications. Whatever it might be, you will absolutely love it.



QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value most in a leader?

Honesty, ethics and professionalism.

What is your favourite film?

The original Top Gun.

A quote that has inspired you recently?

“The most powerful thing to do or say is that I don’t know and I don’t understand.”

Katie Carter

Company **Virgin Atlantic** / Job Title **Head of Retail and Channel Effectiveness**



I studied business and accounting at university before working in retail merchandising for six years. After deciding that I wanted to change the direction of my career, I used my transferrable skills to move to Virgin Atlantic. The brand really appealed to me, particularly because of the values it holds.

In my time with the airline, I have mostly held product development or product management roles. More recently, I have been able to lean on my prior retailing experience albeit in a different capacity to lead our Holidays Retail team. It is great to bring both my commercial experience and retail experience together.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

Travel is such an important part of how we spend our time out, creating those special memories, and it is so rewarding to know that people are choosing to travel with us for the great experiences we provide. It is also about the people, the passion and engagement, be that customer facing, product development or operational roles. It is that love people have for travel whatever part of the

customer or people journey they are involved with. The work is quite varied and I enjoy that alongside meeting others in the industry that share this passion.

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

I think that the industry will become increasingly personalised, using digital capabilities to progress. Customers want differentiation, and to stand out in



a competitive marketplace, it is important to deliver that. Sustainability is also a key area where I expect there to be change, with the industry becoming more transparent with sustainability credentials. The industry as a whole has a responsibility to drive change in terms of sustainability.

What are you, and Virgin Atlantic, doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

At Virgin Atlantic, we have a women's network called Scarlet which is run by women across different levels of the organisation, bringing women together to share career journeys and support female career progression. Virgin Atlantic's Passport to Change programme supports charity partners, aiming to inspire and empower young people, in particular young women from all corners of society to engage with STEM education and build career skills for the future.

Our Learning and Talent teams are also working to offer relevant leadership programmes, including those run by WiHTL, to support women to advance their careers. This includes both internal and external mentors to support women as they develop within the organisation. We also have several women in senior leadership roles which is encouraging to other women looking to progress.

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

Be yourself and be proactive about what you want. In the past few years, I've had a mentor who has helped me to map out my career in terms of what I want to achieve next. I proactively went out and made that happen. Don't hold back and have the confidence to push yourself outside of your comfort zone because that is when you develop and learn the most.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Estelle Hollingsworth, our Chief People Officer, is a real, authentic leader.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

Principles by Ray Dalio.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Do 100 things one percent better" - Clive Woodward.



Eva Chan

Company **Wyndham Hotels & Resorts** / Job Title **Head of Strategy and Feasibility EMEA**



I have always been fascinated by the travel industry since I was a child because I like talking to people from different cultural backgrounds. However, fate took a turn, and I began my career as an accountant at PwC Hong Kong. I never forgot about my passion, and

I was always on the lookout for opportunities to work in the travel industry. It was really hard because I didn't have any connections, nor thought my experiences would be relevant. Around ten years ago, due to a change in personal circumstances, I moved to the UK. Instead of staying in investment banking, I took the plunge and studied at Oxford Brookes University for a master's degree in Hospitality. I was grateful that I met my mentor who not only introduced me to his industry contacts, but also taught me to look at my skills from a different perspective. Since then, I have worked at Michels and Taylor, JLL and now at Wyndham Hotels & Resorts EMEA, in various roles which utilise my analytical, financial, and accounting skills.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Never underestimate yourself and keep an open mind about opportunities beyond the traditional career path. Think outside the box and push yourself out of your comfort zone. You will reach a beautiful world if you do. Surround yourself with people who are supportive and who help you build your confidence.

Also don't be afraid to ask questions and reach out for help. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, there are a lot more people who are willing to help than you think. The key is you need to make the first move.

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

The biggest challenge mostly came from myself, doubting about my ability, and questioning whether I am making the right judgement. I am grateful to have met various mentors (both women and men) who offered me advice throughout the different stages of my career. I learnt that there is no perfect answer, you can only do your best, trust your instincts and everything will follow.

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

Diversity and inclusion are a big part of Wyndham's culture. We want to ensure that everyone can reach their full potential regardless of their gender, race, and beliefs. Ultimately, diversity of experience leads to greater innovation and allows companies to achieve greater success.

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 has introduced new ways of working, and has proved that we can still be productive without sitting in the office five days a week. That's a big shift in mindset and it changes our behaviour. Physical interaction still plays a huge role as not everyone is good at communicating online. We need to be innovative in offering solutions and products to both our employees and consumers. I think no one has figured out the optimal way yet so there is a lot of work that needs to be done in this area.



QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity and accountability. Also being a good communicator and an inspiring person.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

If In Doubt, Wash Your Hair by Anya Hindmarch.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Stay hungry, stay foolish."



Lezli Dickson

Company **PizzaExpress** / Job Title **Head of Employee Relations and Organisational Design**



For a long time, I was planning to become a teacher and throughout my time at university, I worked in hospitality to keep my finances afloat. When I reached my graduate year, I had changed my mind about teaching and panicked – what else could

I do? Like many others, I hadn't realised it at the time, but it was those practical experiences and skills gained in hospitality that had best set me up for my future career. We still have some lessons to learn as an industry in selling HTL as an aspirational and first-choice career.

I moved between hospitality and retail via pubs. When I left London to relocate back to the North East fifteen years ago, some of my peers (and even a senior leader) were very vocal in their view that my HR career would stagnate as I left the London-centric retail fashion world. That frustrated me immensely.

Eight years ago, I joined PizzaExpress as a People Business Partner. The move to greater flexibility with hybrid working that the pandemic brought has made the move to my current role as Head of Employee Relations and Organisational Design possible.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Kate Nicholls, the CEO of UKHospitality – she is a fantastic advocate for our industry.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Someone who celebrates differences and differing points of view, who promotes discussion, debate, challenge, and learning.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Be firm on the issues and fair on the people." A simple but effective mantra.

What is your favourite book?

If I Could Tell You Just One Thing...: Encounters with Remarkable People and Their Most Valuable Advice by Richard Reed. I don't necessarily agree with it all, but it sparks a great debate.



What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

Working with the fascinating people you find in the industry. It's wonderful being able to work with such a diverse team. That includes people from different countries and backgrounds, and diversity in all its many forms. Hospitality is such a great sector for personal growth and learning irrespective of your background.

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

Whilst hybrid working opens many previously restricted opportunities it is critical that employers properly design jobs for hybrid and remote working. It's vital to ensure equality of opportunity for learning and development, progression and reward and recognition, regardless of where and when people work. We need to help managers on how to best manage and support their hybrid teams effectively, including enhanced approaches to performance management,

remote communication, collaboration, and relationship-building.

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

One of the fantastic things I see in our business is visibility of our female role models. We have an equal split of men and women in our Leadership Team and despite many years working in fashion retail I had never worked in that kind of environment before. It is fantastic for people coming into the business and starting their HTL careers to see this as the norm.

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

Don't allow yourself to be pigeonholed. Seek feedback, especially when it may be difficult, and don't underestimate the benefit of spending time reflecting on what went right... as well as what went wrong. If you learn from your mistakes – it's all great experience.

Vicky Douglas

Company **Scott Dunn** / Job Title **Head of Guest Loyalty, Sales Management and Operations**



I have been working in travel for more than twenty years. I was passionate about different cultures from a young age and decided to skip university and went straight into work at 18. My first job was at Kuoni Travel, which was one of the biggest UK operators at the time.

It was an amazing experience, and I learned a lot there. I then spent a year at Virgin Management as a VIP Travel PA. After that, I joined Scott Dunn, and worked in various roles, mainly in sales, got more and more involved in leadership and projects until I got to where I am today.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

I think the key thing is what we're working with. Our products in travel are experiential, so they're different from things that people consume all the time and have an emotional impact on the buyer. This makes you feel connected to your guests. We are particularly lucky at Scott Dunn because we get really good feedback loops. For me, getting feedback on things that I dedicate my time to is satisfying. It's also a good opportunity to learn from.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in the past few years?

Until recently, I think travel as an industry was lagging somewhat behind others in terms of inclusion and diversity. It wasn't something we talked about very often when I first started out in travel. At Scott Dunn, we have been working hard to improve, for example how we recruit – we organise assessment days to attract

a wider candidate group rather than just those who perhaps might have been recommended by a friend or have been lucky enough to travel a lot themselves. We have introduced new policies to better support our team, including flexibility for parents and carers and those experiencing menopause in the workplace for example. I am grateful for that as a mum of two at a certain age! My work-life balance has been so much better in the last few years and I'm able to do more school pickups and have more time for family. Scott Dunn also supported me when I wanted to go back to university and get my degree finally.

What sort of challenges may women face in the HTL sector?

I find it hard to accept that women often don't have an equal role and therefore I won't allow it to be the reality for me. If it were allowed to happen in a business where I worked, I would walk away from that business. But I do know that other women



have struggled with this in the past, I would like to do more to help others be more confident about what's OK and what's not OK when it comes to this topic.

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

Women bring a great deal to hospitality because it's a people and experience-

led industry. Customers (or guests as we call them) are going through a sensory journey, so that can be conveyed by us telling a story and painting a picture of how amazing the beach is at a hotel, or maybe how incredible the food tastes. I believe women are particularly skilled at making that kind of emotional connection so having women in hospitality and travel is essential.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Wendy Kenneally, previous director of commercial and operations at Kuoni.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"The goal is not to be perfect by the end.

The goal is to be better each day" – Simon Sinek.

What is your favourite book?

Looking at the Stars, Jo Cotterill. A book I enjoyed reading with my teenage daughter.

Janice Duncan

Company **Rank Interactive** / Job Title **Chief Financial Officer**



After graduating from Glasgow University many years ago, my first job was as a graduate within the banking industry. That gave me a great introduction into the need to put customers first and at the heart of all decisions. I stayed within banking for seven years and then

moved into a role within the online insurance sector for a few years before coming into the online gambling industry. All these industries are customer-centric and focused on providing the best customer experience.

I've been in the gambling industry for just under ten years now, working across a number of different companies, to progress to where I am today as Chief Finance Officer for the Digital business within The Rank Group Plc. Rank is a fantastic company to work for and really support the development of their female talent. The online industry is often seen as a male dominated space but there is a huge amount of female talent within it, which Rank recognises and is always looking to showcase.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

To believe in myself more and know that my opinion is as important and relevant as others. Being heard doesn't mean being the loudest in the room. It's about knowing the value of what you have to say and speaking with confidence and authority to influence those around you.

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

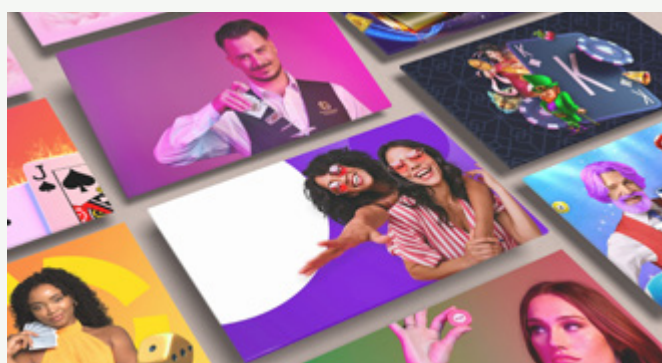
Customers of the hospitality industry come from a variety of backgrounds, and the only way we can successfully communicate with our customers is if we have that diversity within our own workforce as well.

We've set up several different working groups within The Rank Group Plc

looking at equality, diversity and inclusion. I am the Chair of the Women at Rank Group, which is a forum for letting everyone in our organisation, women and men, hear from a cross-section of women, both internal and external to the company. Our speakers talk about their experiences and the challenges they've had to overcome, which is often very useful for others to listen to if they're facing similar challenges in their work or personal lives.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

No two days are the same! I love the fact that it's fast-paced and always changing. I have teams across three locations: Gibraltar, Mauritius and the UK. It is fantastic to have different cultures and personalities coming



together. As a leader, it gives you the ability to hone your skills to make sure you are encouraging everybody and addressing everyone's needs.

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 gaming industry has gone through a lot of

change over the past few years, particularly when it comes to regulation and ensuring people are gambling responsibly. Technology is at the heart of our industry and will continue to drive change into the future. Customers' desires and needs are continually changing so it is critical that our industry can continue to adapt and evolve as well.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Being as open, honest and transparent as you can be, even when approaching difficult conversations.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Believe in yourself.

You are braver than you think, more talented than you know, and capable of more than you imagine"
– Roy T. Bennett.

What is your favourite book?

Gravitas by Caroline Goyder.

Laura Edwards

Company **easyJet** / Job Title **Delivery & Change Director**



My love for this industry started early on when I discovered I could fulfil my desire to learn, travel the world and gain invaluable life experience through a variety of roles in hospitality. After graduating from university with an International

Hospitality degree, my corporate career began in the events industry working across international sporting and music events and where a passion for creating brilliant and memorable experiences for people developed. As a natural next step, I moved into HR within aviation, and later with change and people at the core into transformation and technology which is a hugely exciting area. Today I am the Delivery and Change Director at easyJet.



“ Having visible role models, who can prove what is possible and encourage others to take bold steps and flourish, is so important.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

You don't need to have all the answers to seize the next big opportunity. Having confidence and being yourself will get you there!

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

It is fantastic to be involved in such an experience-oriented industry, no two days are ever the same. It is hard work at times, yet hugely rewarding and working with brilliant

individuals and teams is what really motivates me. There is also so much breadth within HTL which provides you with the opportunity to develop in different ways and to find something that you love to make more than one career out of.

How do you think the HTL sector is changing?

Many positive changes can be seen in how the industry is adapting and evolving. Delivering a more personalised experience and greater choice for consumers in the future will be key, particularly given increased flexibility in where and how people can work and a focus on sustainable tourism. We are pushing the boundaries through innovation and the use of technology, whilst also maintaining the personal touch that is so special to HTL. What is very apparent is this will lead to continued opportunities opening up for people, and I think that, in the

future, the sector will be even better than before.

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

At easyJet, we are focusing on continually developing a culture where everybody can be the best version of themselves and can feel a sense of belonging. We have also moved to an inclusion-first perspective,

where creating an inclusive culture is key to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. Having visible role models, who can prove what is possible and encourage others to take bold steps and flourish, is so important. We are encouraging greater diversity across all parts of the organisation and giving greater flexibility around how people balance work and life.

QUICKFIRE

What is your favourite film?

Forrest Gump.

What is the most interesting thing that you have read, seen or heard recently?

I have been reading a lot about adaptive leadership and how it can enable individuals and organisations to thrive

in the face of challenge. On a recent holiday I also read Daisy May Cooper's autobiography and loved it!

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Visibility, authenticity, being willing to listen and to inspire and encourage people.

Gemma Evans-Hurley

Company **Compass Group UK&I** / Job Title **Culinary Lead Projects**



Food is my first love. I knew I wanted to be a chef from a young age and set my ambitions high. At 18, I graduated from the prestigious Westminster Kingsway College with a professional chef's diploma. After working in the London restaurant scene, I ventured

out to Spain to learn a European approach to cooking. I joined Compass in 2010 as a Sous Chef, and then studied further to evolve my skills. This led to me being promoted to Head Chef aged 21, where I then naturally progressed into a National Executive Chef role just a year later. Following my career in our business and sector I entered the educational world of Chartwells as an Executive Chef in London.



What has been the most rewarding part of your career?

I spent over five years planning and delivering educational workshops in my role with Chartwells, which included food festivals and community engagement days. This is when I first realised what a huge difference I could make. I loved educating people on different ingredients and evolving their pallets. In 2012, I was called to compete in the World Culinary Olympics in Erfurt, Germany. I won gold and have since returned in 2021 with a regional team taking my second gold medal.

Why do you think it is important to have role models in the industry?

Being a role model and having role models is absolutely critical to promoting our great industry and nurturing the next generation of talent. I'm incredibly lucky to have had great mentors who push me to expand my skills and knowledge, so I'm a huge advocate of showing people that anything is possible. We have a fantastic career pathway at Compass which was promoted recently when I went back to Westminster College to speak to culinary students about the industry opportunities. I gave the advice I wish

I had been given.

How are you, and Compass, encouraging greater diversity within HTL?

At Compass we have established DE&I networks, plus a regular calendar of activity throughout the year. I am the proud Chair of the Women in Food initiative which strives for a positive environment for women and allies, underpinning support, development, and engagement, which makes for brilliantly diverse and dynamic teams. When I set out as an ambitious young chef, never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be able to change people's lives, but Women in Food has given me the platform to do just that!

Why should more women consider a career within HTL?

It is so rewarding working in this diverse industry, and as a woman, a company is so much more enticing with good initiatives and opportunities for all. The Women in Food network has been instrumental in supporting change around maternity, menopause and working environments which allows us to champion the best for all our employees. I am passionate for change for people and change that supports our road map to net zero. Who wouldn't want to be a part of history?

QUICKFIRE

What quote inspires you the most?

Wisdom in the mind is better than money in the hand.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Focus, commitment, passion and empathy.

What is the most interesting thing that you have read, seen or heard recently?

The statistics from The MBS Group on how diverse our industry is, from the WiHTL and DiR Inclusion Summit. And the passion from all parties to impact change.



Nuala Gallagher

Company **Greene King** / Job Title **Brand Director**



I've been at Greene King for four-and-a-half years and prior to that I was at Michells & Butlers for about eight years. I started my professional career in FMCG at Kerrygold, selling into grocers which really grounded me in my basics of marketing. I joined Merlin in 2007, and it really

felt like a light had been turned on. I realised I loved the HTL sector!

The amazing yet challenging thing I found at Merlin and within pubs is that you deliver through people. Your marketing can be amazing, but unless you inspire hearts and minds it will all fall down. It's about delivering something that transcends. The hospitality sector brings joy to people's lives, and the thing about pubs is that they're cradle to grave. They're there for all the important moments in our lives, big and small.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Emma Woods, former CEO of wagamama.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Setting a vision and being clear on how we get there,

and openness to two-way communication.

What is your favourite book or film?

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee, and I love those classics like *Dirty Dancing*, *The Bodyguard* and *Grease 2*.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Have more self-confidence. When I was younger, I suffered from imposter syndrome. But the people who ask you questions quite often don't know the answers either, so don't feel pressured to feel like you need to know all the answers to be credible. Allow yourself the time to go and get all the answers. Especially as a marketer in hospitality, it can be very emotive. So be customer-first in all the decisions you make.

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

Through our customer-first agenda, at Greene King we're thinking about how we can represent minority groups and voices in our concept developments by dialing up those voices in our own business. We have several inclusion groups, for employees from black and ethnic minority groups, women, and people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

For me, it's about having those open conversations and acknowledging that everyone has different pressures in their lives. It's ok to ask understanding

questions, to be curious, and to embrace different perspectives.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

The attitudes of the people you work with are infectious; I really feel the sector brings together passionate, like-minded people. And our customers are so down-to-earth. You come into any one of our pubs and the people there have so much character. Hospitality really is a window into life.

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

Through and on the back of Covid, I think the HTL sector is a much more united front. We spoke as one voice and that made the sector stronger, particularly in terms of how we lobby Government. I also now see hospitality as truly joining the rally for D&I and ESG, using those lenses to inform our future. That includes understanding what the new normal is for a flexible working week, and understanding what young people are looking for in a workplace.



Sarah Grime

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



I didn't take a conventional route into the fitness industry. I had a passion for art and design but wasn't sure which direction to take, so instead of going to university full time I joined an architects' practice. I stayed there for nearly nine years whilst studying

architecture part-time at the University of Lincoln, before moving to a smaller practice where I started working with The Gym Group. I set up my own practice in 2017, where The Gym Group became my main client and later asked me to come in-house as a consultant. This allowed me to diversify my role into project management – which I love – supporting the business as it integrated its easyGym and Lifestyle Fitness acquisitions. I felt the pull from the leisure and fitness industry, so moved to The Gym Group full time combining my passion for gyms and design. I have an entrepreneurial mindset and like to get involved in everything, so before I knew it, I was working well beyond my original remit. As Head of Format, my team are responsible for the design of our gyms both at a macro and micro level, including architecture, interior, in-gym product segments, signage and kit design. I also manage our capital enhancement programme, including major refits and product enhancements. We have just successfully completed the external signage rebrand of over 200 gyms over a short, three-month period which is an achievement I am super proud of!



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Karren Brady. She's humble but still a strong and confident woman.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Integrity. When you thank someone, they want to know you mean it.

What is your favourite book or film?

A recent favourite *How to Own the Room: Women and the Art of Brilliant Speaking*, by Viv Groskop.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

Working in architecture, construction and fitness, which are all traditionally male-dominated sectors, has definitely sparked a passion for equity, diversity and inclusion. I believe equity is one of the most important facets of this conversation. At The Gym Group, it's important we break down the barriers to participation, for both our members and employees. We want to ensure everyone has the same opportunities, whether that be to achieve their fitness goals or work in a role they had previously thought unattainable.

What are the D&I priorities at The Gym Group today?

Just one of the areas of focus is accessibility. We are striving to ensure our spaces are fully accessible to everyone, regardless of ability or disability. So now we would never, for example, put a mezzanine

in a gym without a lift for wheelchair users even if there was duplicate space on the ground floor. Thinking more broadly, we are ensuring that accessibility is baked-in to the holistic design of our gyms, not just around the physical layout, but also wayfinding, branding and visual identity.

What piece of advice would you give to your younger self?

A well known quote I find myself sharing a lot: ask for forgiveness, not for permission. Especially with women. Earlier in my career, I would often refrain from speaking up or making decisions in fear of stepping on someone else's toes or questioning whether I was qualified to have a view. But then I'd see other people at the same level – especially men – being praised and rewarded for doing just that! So, I'd tell my younger self to just do it and not fear the consequences.

Carrie Harris

Company **British Airways** / Job Title **Director of Sustainability**



I've been in aviation sustainability for twenty-five years now and, in retrospect, I see that it's no accident that I ended up in this sector – my father was passionate about flying, and I'd often spend weekends at the Flying Club for fun. I also love travel and am a passionate

environmentalist, so my career choice brings all three elements together.

I joined Heathrow as Environment Manager in 2000 and worked my way up to Senior Sustainability Manager before moving to NATS Air Traffic Control, as Head of Air Traffic Environmental Management in 2007. I enjoyed the journey the team led in NATS, transforming the business to embed sustainability in the operational culture. I joined IAG in 2016 as Group Sustainability Manager and thrived on the international perspective and am proud of the leadership position we took with 'Flightpath to net zero', a global first for the airline sector. In December 2020 I moved within the Group to join British Airways as Head of Sustainability before becoming Director of Sustainability in 2022. The first flight I ever took was with British Airways at age seven. It's such an iconic brand, and the organisation has been a key stakeholder for me throughout my career, so I was thrilled to have the opportunity to shape a new vision for sustainability.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

Working with such a diverse, skilled, and motivated team of people is incredibly energising and the opportunity to have a positive impact at scale is what motivates me. With over 30,000 colleagues and tens of millions of customers, there's always a job to do to inspire and engage people on sustainability at BA!

Creating the brand and planning the launch event for BA Better World was one of the most exciting phases,

particularly unveiling our specially painted aircraft emblazoned with the slogan: "BA Better World: Welcome on board our most important journey yet." It's become a great talking point and people love to spot it out on its travels. I hope the BA Better World brand will be a lasting legacy too.

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

There were many years when working in sustainability felt as though we were trying to push water uphill so I've learned

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Personal passion, outcome-focused and fairness.

What is your favourite book?

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens.

What is your favourite film?

Top Gun – the original.

how to keep searching for the 'yes' even when the immediate response might be 'no'!

What does D&I look like at British Airways?

We've moved a long way on D&I in British Airways in the last couple of years and it's now one of the company's top priorities. We've set ambitious targets for gender and ethnic diversity, established a leadership reverse mentoring programme and introduced a menopause support plan. With menopause, we'd found that too many talented people were leaving the industry during this time of their life, so we put together a dedicated package to offer support. Now every single person

working at BA has access to a menopause-trained counsellor and direct medical support, either for themselves or a family member.

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

I'm particularly passionate about aviation as I believe it's a force for good. It's fast paced and not only super exciting on a day-to-day basis, but its global nature makes it incredibly dynamic and intellectually rewarding. I also strongly believe that anyone could find a role they love in aviation. There's something for everyone, whether that's flying, management, sales, engineering, finance, customer service... you name it.



Joanne Hind

Company **Greene King** / Job Title **Operations Manager**



Initially, I considered pursuing a medical career and then thought about TV and broadcasting which was my area of study at the University of Leeds. But whilst I was studying, I joined TGI Fridays as a waitress and fell in love with hospitality. I worked with TGI Fridays for 14

years, first as a waitress and latterly as a General Manager, before joining Greene King which was entirely different, but I loved it. I have now been with Greene King for twelve and a half years, starting as a General Manager before becoming a Food Trainer which was a coaching role for around 147 pubs. I then became a Business Development Manager which is a role that I held for six years and now I manage the Business Development Managers in my new role as Operations Manager.



What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

There are so many happy memories associated with going out for meals and having a drink, and it is nice to be part of that. Personally, I remember the first time that I was able to buy lunch for my dad when I started to work and that was a really big moment for me. The pandemic also showed us how important the pub is to the community, particularly to the older generation, who may visit the pub because they are not going to speak to anybody else. It is rewarding to know that my team and I are contributing to key moments in people's lives.

“ It is rewarding to know that myself and my team are contributing to key moments in people's lives.



great flexibility. Since the pandemic, people's priorities have changed and now more people are able to work remotely in non-pub-based job roles. Today, more than half of employees at Greene King are women. It's a great industry to be involved in.

What does D&I look like at Greene King?

We have four main ELIG groups in which we discuss topics surrounding gender, ability, LGBTQ+ and ethnicity. I have been part of the ELIG group for opportunities for women at Greene King for around eight years and we are now discussing key things like menopause. Being part of these groups provides a great way for us to understand pressures that we might not be able to relate to on a personal level. We want people to be allies and we want people to join them.

What have you learnt from challenges that you have had in your career?

I have learnt that it is always important to acknowledge when we don't get things right. Particularly in a pub setting, it is so important to make things right when they go wrong as we are at the heart of the community.

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

There are fantastic opportunities within HTL and there is also

QUICKFIRE

What is your favourite film?

The Goonies.

What is your favourite book?

The Hunger Games, Suzanne Collins.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Integrity is the most important quality.



Sara Holt

Company **Merlin Entertainments** / Job Title **UK & Ireland Sales and Marketing Director, Midway UK**



sector to work in with brilliant opportunities for marketers and they were right – I completely fell in love with the sector when I joined Merlin. I have been privileged to work in some of the best marketing organisations in the world, but the end-to-end marketing experience at Merlin is unique.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

Marketing in HTL is really special. It is broader than traditional marketing roles, we don't just make campaigns, we really run the business, particularly in Merlin. This means that within our remit sits full profit and loss accountability, pricing and yield per guest and guest experience. Even within campaign creation, our role is bigger than in many organisations, with PR and e-commerce sitting right at the heart of things. I love this. My role really is so much bigger than pretty pictures and means I have embraced my inner numbers geek. Art and science come together in a special way at Merlin.

Our marketers also get to work with our very talented colleagues at Merlin Magic Making, the team who design everything from our LEGOLAND theme parks and rollercoasters to our amazing wax figures at Madame Tussauds, as well as IP teams on

I started my career in advertising and I very quickly learnt that I only like working on brands that I really enjoy and feel an affinity to, like the BBC, Heart, Capital FM and LEGO. Before entering the HTL sector, female leaders I encountered had told me that it was a phenomenal

a range of other brands, including partners such as DreamWorks.

Once you have learnt the Merlin way of doing marketing you can pretty much run any business.

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

I hope there will be a more inclusive culture generally and some measured change in terms of the diversity of role models. I want to see more women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds moving into senior leadership positions across all types of hospitality.

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

Merlin is doing a lot to progress women in the company. Our 'XCalibre Rising' programme, for example, focuses on front-line attraction staff to accelerate them into leadership positions. This initiative is about growing our own talent, particularly

“ I completely fell in love with the sector when I joined Merlin.

amongst women and people from minority backgrounds.

We always look for culture add, not culture fit, when hiring new people to join our team. We want to bring in different types of people from a variety of backgrounds. Having diverse life experiences around the table is critical to Merlin's future success, and something that I am personally incredibly passionate about.

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

Firstly, I would say enjoy it! It is a great industry, and you will make some great friends. We are all on this inclusion and diversity journey together so if you look around and do not see other people like you, recognise that you can change things. I would also say do not take limitations as a given. If you love the industry but are finding it hard because of family commitments, let people know your position and search for solutions. And most importantly, be yourself. Society and businesses need people who ask tough questions.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

I have three: Mike Vallis, Divisional Director of Merlin Midway UK. He is doing a lot of work to encourage men to understand what it is like to be a woman in our industry. Our former Chief Executive Nick Varney, who has just retired – he built

an amazing business. And Fiona Eastwood, our COO, because she is a forthright woman and makes things happen.

What is your favourite book?

The Authority Gap by Mary Ann Sieghart and *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado-Perez.



Niki Hutchinson

Company **Welcome Break** / Job Title **Head of Financial Planning & Analysis**



When I left university, I was very open-minded about the type of job I wanted and luckily, I had an incredibly supportive manager at Whitbread, where I had begun working as a Finance Administrator. He encouraged me to spend

time in different departments, which helped me to decide where I saw my future career. I enjoyed my time in finance where there was an opportunity to study CIMA and have a clear career path. I applied for a finance analyst role and gained a huge amount of confidence when I was offered the job. I will forever be indebted to my first manager who showed belief in me and could see my potential.

I then moved to a broader finance analyst role with the JD Wetherspoons FP&A team. After five years of studying CIMA I passed my final Case Study paper and decided to progress my career with a move to HRG who owned Argos and Homebase. I spent eight years in four different roles, each time being promoted into a more senior role, eventually managing a team and mentoring several part-qualified finance analysts. During my time with HRG I started a family, having two lots of maternity leave, including one with a set of twins. This was a hugely challenging time, learning to balance work and home life with my young family. I now work for Welcome Break, heading up the team responsible for budgeting, reporting, analysis and finance systems. I report directly into the Finance Director with a clear insight into the strategy of the business, a role where I have a huge amount of job satisfaction.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Debbie Hewitt, MBE, Chairwoman of the Football Association.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Having a clear vision and

being able to take your team on a journey with that vision. Having belief in your team.

Favourite book?

Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

I really enjoy working with companies where the core of the company – who they are – is tangible. I can go and visit our sites, work at these sites, and most importantly, I'm able to see the end product or service that reaches the customers. There's also a real buzz from the operational and commercial teams, who really buy into the business and our brands. Their enthusiasm motivates me to do a good job.

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

I would hope there is continued opportunities for female representation and diversity in Director and Senior Management positions. I believe it's really important that Senior Leadership Teams reflect the diverse workforces we have across the HTL industry.

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

Our Head of People, Nicola Marshall and the Leadership Team are very focused on identifying opportunities for female leaders to go on development programmes, mentor people and similar opportunities to progress careers.

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

Have open conversations with people and your managers about your needs and aspirations. Speak to other women to build up your confidence, because a lot of it is about having self-belief. Women need to put themselves forward and be supported to progress into all senior management roles, across the diverse functions of a business.

Angela Jobson

Company **Merlin Entertainments** / Job Title **Global Brand Director – Madame Tussauds & Legoland Discovery Centre**



I started my career in fashion retail, working for H&M in their press office. I loved the fact that there was no hierarchy there, which was great to experience at the start of my career. I then moved to Selfridges in a marketing role, which was quite different, before moving to

Gap where I worked in a part-time role for six years before taking extended maternity leave. After I had my daughter, I wanted a fresh challenge (which has been the case both times after I had a child) and that's how I ended up at Merlin Entertainments.

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

That's a really hard question because I love this sector. We're so privileged that we get to help people make lasting memories. It's a responsibility getting it right, but such a joyful thing that I'd find it incredibly hard to step out of. My personal passion is interiors and design but I'm far too stubborn and selfish to make a career out of it because I'd only want to do it my way!

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

After I had my daughter, I joined Merlin

Entertainments and absolutely fell in love with it. The team was young, and I was the only person who had children. I realised I had a responsibility to show them that you could have a senior role and have children at the same time. We also had an initiative called 'Women in Merlin', where our NED, Fru Hazlitt, talked about the importance of showing up because there aren't many senior female role models. I really believe that "if you can't see it, you can't be it", so that was when I decided to become a more active role model.

For the women in my team who have children, I've created some part-time roles. I recognise that



there is wealth of talented women who have much to contribute but are not always able to return full-time. My advice to those women is to be kind to yourself in the process of returning to work. Support with childcare will allow you the space and time to focus. Having worked part-time myself I know that the commitment and output of work is just as strong when part-time.

What has been your experience of role models in the sector?

There are probably two role models who have had

the biggest impact on my career to date. The first is Nicola Pryce who recruited me into Merlin where she was Marketing Director. She's very brave and bold, and a big supporter of the women in her team. Following Nicola, I was lucky enough to then have another inspiring female boss, Fiona Eastwood who is now Chief Operating Officer at Merlin. She is very confident and has real convictions while also being really supportive. They both made me believe that I could be better than I probably thought I could be at that point in time.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Empathetic and empowering.

What is your favourite movie?

Moulin Rouge.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Be yourself; everyone else is already taken"
– Oscar Wilde.



Sarah John

Company **SSP Group Plc** / Job Title **Director of Corporate Affairs**



I've always had an interest in food and hospitality; at the age of 16 (and with the use of my mum's car!), I was catering for events at the local tennis and golf club and filling people's freezers! Whilst studying for my degree in hotel, catering, and business

administration, I spent time at The Ritz training in management and at the Hilton working in finance. It was here I received my first impactful career advice from my boss. Her advice was to get an accountancy qualification with one of the big six firms, "it's the best grounding you can have in business." She was right, and a few years later I qualified with Price Waterhouse, working in London and New York. After a spell as an equity analyst covering hotels, travel and leisure, I was headhunted to join Compass Group as Director of Investor Relations and then Strategy which was an amazing experience. After 11 years with Compass, I took a break to spend more time with my children and parents, but when offered a part-time role heading up Investor Relations at SSP, I took it, as it allowed me to balance work and family commitments. Since then, the role has expanded and as Director of Corporate Affairs I'm also responsible for Group Communications and Sustainability – an immensely rewarding, diverse and dynamic role.

What advice would you give to future generations who are hoping to work within hospitality?

I think you have to love it. You have to be passionate about food, about people (colleagues and customers) and about service and you've either got that feeling or you don't. If you get a buzz from helping people in their daily lives, then it's an amazing industry with so many opportunities, functionally and geographically across a range of sectors.

What has been your experience of role modelling within the sector?

With much of my earlier career in finance I didn't come across many senior female role models and so it's now a particular passion of mine. I'm focused on how we support ambitious young women through a mentoring scheme with senior women across the Group. There is such a huge spectrum of roles and routes to success. Sometimes someone just needs to shine a light on it for you and give you that bit of confidence to go for it.



What steps are you and your organisation taking to drive change in HTL?

As a group, SSP has made huge progress in sustainability, working hard on delivering 'climate smart food' to reach net-zero by 2040. Whilst already a hugely diverse organisation, we continue to drive change through a range of initiatives including establishing our first Global Inclusion Council and creating special interest groups enabling colleagues to connect, engage and share experiences on topics such as menopause, women

in tech and LGBTQ+. It's a full agenda but we're not complacent and continually strive for more positive change.

I passionately believe diverse teams make better decisions and provide role models for the next generation. Creating those teams starts with the hiring process. It's too easy to say "the job should go to the most highly qualified person". Sometimes the right person for the team or organisation is someone with a different background who will bring a different perspective and insight.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Honesty and integrity.
Focus and compassion.

Quote that inspires you?

"Be humble. No one has infinite wisdom."

What is your favourite book?

I enjoyed reading *Becoming* by Michelle Obama.



Raj Jones

Company **Sodexo** / Job Title **Head of DE&I (UK&I)**



I started my career working in learning and development (L&D) and in 2007 joined Sodexo's justice services business in an L&D role. After a few years, I was offered a secondment to the Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) team, which I accepted and it ignited my interest

in developing my career in this area. I left Sodexo briefly when an external opportunity to gain more experience in D&I came up but returned after a year when an opportunity arose to join Sodexo's DE&I team in a full-time role. In 2020 I was given the opportunity to be head of the department on an interim basis and then in 2021 I was appointed to the role on a permanent basis. I now lead Sodexo's diversity, equity and inclusion for the UK and Ireland, which has around 30,000 employees.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

We have some great diversity in the lower levels of our business, be it ethnicity, gender, disability, etc. I have found the HTL industry to be very welcoming for people, in terms of the opportunities it provides for them to grow and progress careers. In my role I am responsible for enabling a sense of belonging for our people, it is important that they can come to work as their authentic selves and for them to thrive and feel they're doing a good job. They don't need to be someone they're not. Also, breaking down some of the societal norms and helping change the face of the industry is very exciting.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in the past?

I'm very fortunate to work for a business that is completely committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The leadership team is open to being challenged. They're very supportive in setting the tone and being role models. They are driving the agenda by treating people fairly and giving people a voice. Sodexo is doing a lot in this space to set the bar high.

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

There are not many people who look like me in this industry. I am an Asian. I am also an Asian woman. I think that has

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity and a caring nature.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken."

What is your favourite film?

Dirty Dancing.

been a bit of a challenge in terms of my own sense of belonging sometimes. But I believe I am very privileged to be in a role like this which comes with a degree of responsibility to be an advocate and an ally for others who don't necessarily have that voice. I'm uniquely positioned to champion those marginalised voices and share their stories. It means I sometimes have to step outside my own comfort zone to share my own experiences to help to build inclusion for other people.

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

It is an industry that can offer flexibility and a wide range of opportunities for growth. I'm a mum with two young children, and I certainly find the industry to be flexible in terms of hours and appreciating output instead of input of hours. This sector reflects its customers and clients, so the input of women is very important. It helps our services to be more flexible and more accommodating to understand it from firsthand experience.



Arash Kang

Company **Whitbread Plc** / Job Title **Commercial Counsel**



As a child, a family friend told me that I would become a lawyer when I was older and the idea just stuck! I studied law and then the post graduate course at university and whilst seeking a training contract, I took on a temporary job as an executive assistant

at a manufacturing business in Leicester. It was here that I had the opportunity to witness the action in the board room and get exposure to the business' core challenges and I knew I wanted to pursue a legal career in-house. Fast forward and I took a paralegal job at Iron Mountain, and with the support of some incredible mentors, I become their first ever trainee solicitor. After qualifying, I worked in FMCG for a short while and have now worked at Whitbread as a commercial lawyer for almost three years. I love the breadth of work involved in working for the largest owned and managed hotel operator – it keeps me on my toes!



afterthought but is woven into culture, processes and decision making, it becomes the responsibility of everyone, not just of HR functions. Recently I heard Dame Moya Greene say that in order to affect and drive change, you must have the support and buy in of your senior leaders and employees, without that, nothing changes. At Whitbread, we are honest about where we are on our journey but have set very clear commitments for both the Race Network (which I co-chair) and the Business to ensure that tomorrow's Whitbread gives everyone a voice at the top table.

It's so amazing to work in a business of over 30,000 people who are truly committed to delivering a consistently excellent product and experience to every single guest.

How do you think the HTL industry will change in the future?

I hope we will see more transparency from businesses in HTL about their sustainability strategies and in particular their commitments to operate as a net zero business. More consumers are starting to make deliberately green choices and businesses will need to move quickly to meet the increasing demand for green accommodation. Price, experience and location will always be important but increasingly the travel footprint will also count.

QUICKFIRE

What is your favourite book or film?

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (or any of the HP movies!).

Who is your industry role model?

For me, it's my Dad. He started in the services industry as a taxi driver and now is a hotel owner. He gives his time and support to everyone in his business, as the

principle of serving others is embedded into our Sikh faith. He's shown me that it's never too late to follow your dreams, and that with hard work and determination, anything is possible!

What quote inspires you the most?

An African proverb that I recently heard: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't forget to bring your true self along on the journey, embrace your differences and forge your own path with confidence and kindness.

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

A truly inclusive business to me is one that embeds the principles of D&I into every major decision it makes. When it stops being an



Emma Knight

Company **Stagecoach** / Job Title **Group Head of Media & Public Affairs**



My experience with HTL began when I started working in the rail industry at the age of 21 as a PA within the Sales & Marketing team. I quickly became involved in communications, organising events and supporting the team, which led to a variety of

roles working in PR, media, internal communications, crisis communications and public affairs. I then started working for Stagecoach when they became the owner of the rail company I worked for at the time.

Fast forward 24 years and I'm still loving the sector. Transport and travel play such a crucial role in connecting our communities and helping people get to work and college, enabling them to spend time with their family and friends as well as many other important journeys.

In my role, no two days are ever the same. It's a fast-paced role managing the media and external communications for a business with over 24,000 people operating our bus services carrying around two million passengers a day right across the country.



What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

It plays such a crucial role in people's everyday lives. Knowing that you're providing a bus for the nurse who has to get to work to save people's lives, or the granny that is going

to see her grandchildren gives me a huge sense of pride and fulfilment.

I'm pretty biased, but I find the people working within HTL to be some of the warmest and friendliest around. I think it's an industry full of people with a 'can do' attitude.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity, vulnerability, honesty, compassion, and determination.

Who is your industry role model?

My first senior female role model was the Operations Director of the rail company I worked for and is now CEO of Northumbrian Water: Heidi Mottram.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it" – Ferris Bueller.

What is your favourite book?

The C-Word by Lisa Lynch, a humorous and moving story written by the daughter of a friend about her fight with cancer.

How have you felt the D&I agenda evolve in the past few years?

There's a real focus now on sustainability and diversity and inclusion. In my early days in the sector, none of these were subjects that were even talked about, yet we've already made huge strides in these areas, and I can see the passion and determination for that journey to continue.

whole new way of working has been a challenge. As somebody who loves being with people, working from home took some adapting to but for me, the most important thing through this challenge was to keep talking, using my network and work friends for support.

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

The past few years have been some of the most challenging we have ever faced in terms of the pandemic and the recovery. On a personal level, getting used to a

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

There's so many different opportunities and you can be whatever you want to be. The HTL industry plays a crucial role in society, it has such an impact on people and communities and that's something that I find really important and fulfilling.



Anna Knowles

Company **easyJet** / Job Title **Director of PR and Corporate Affairs**



I started my career in a consumer brand-focused PR agency called Freud Communications, looking after big household names like Mars and Pepsi. An opportunity came up at Virgin Atlantic as a Press Officer, which I went for. During my time there, I progressed to heading up

the communications function and now, I've been in airline communications for a total of twenty years, with easyJet for around ten years.

I moved over to easyJet to set up a new press office function there. And now, we are a team of thirteen, predominantly women, spread geographically across Europe and looking after both PR and public affairs in all our key markets.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Louis Theroux – he manages to connect with a whole range of people and get the best from them.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity, empathy and a sense of humour.

What quote inspires you the most?

"In order to be irreplaceable, one must always be different" – Coco Chanel.

What is your favourite book?

Normal People by Sally Rooney, *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold or *The Reader* by Bernhard Schlink.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

I think airlines are inherently interesting to members of the public, and therefore to media and politicians. There is a real mixture of looking after both the corporate reputation of easyJet as a FTSE company and attracting customers to the brand on a consumer-facing front. The resilience and passion of the people you find in HTL is infectious.

“The resilience and passion of the people you find in HTL is infectious.”

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

I'd like to hope that we end up with the industry getting back to full strength following the pandemic. But I also think that the long-term challenge for the industry, from a gender perspective, is improving the imbalance within certain workgroups. We have long championed driving diversity in the pilot community, and I'd really like to see that start to come to fruition in the same way it has with the legal profession and doctors.

And on the sustainability side of things, I hope that real steps are taken towards zero emission technology.

What are you, and easyJet, doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

As my team is predominantly female, I make sure that there is visibility within the organisation, particularly with our senior leaders, of what great work they are doing. I ensure I am supporting them and their career paths as they go through lots of different life changes and challenges.

My team and I are also placed well to have influence and drive the progression of women in the company, having an external view of what is happening in society and making sure that is reflected in how we approach things. Since 2015, my team have really helped to drive the initial impetus around the need to get more female pilots. We started the Amy Johnson Initiative, looking at how we could help to bring better gender balance to that community, running campaigns externally and setting targets internally. We have not only increased the number of applicants, but that pipeline has become more naturally diverse as a result of our campaigns.

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

Embrace flexible working. I think it is making a huge difference for people to choose how they want to work, and I think it has levelled the playing field because it's not gender specific.



Emma Leahy

Company **Wyndham Destinations Asia Pacific** / Job Title **Senior Director Strategic Operations & Administration Asia**



I joined the industry around seven years ago and before that, I was in retail management. I have always been passionate about travel and as a student, I took part in an exchange trip to Italy and lived there for six months. That experience really shaped who I am.

I joined Wyndham Destinations as the manager of sales administration in a sales office in Torquay, Victoria, Australia. Engaging with the people there, and also working on the hotel side of things, really sparked my interest in the industry. I was later given an opportunity to work in a larger office in our Surfers Paradise resort and shortly after, I moved to our corporate office on Australia's Gold Coast. It was there that I truly learned more about the business itself, as well as the wider industry. I also worked with some strong female leaders within the company, which was great.

I am now Senior Director of Strategic Operations & Administration Asia, responsible for establishing operational support, structure, and processes.



What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

It's definitely the people - whether it's the colleagues that you get to work with and learn from, the guests that you interact with, or the peers that you meet at conferences. I enjoy working in an environment where people are passionate about what they do and what they learn.

How have you felt the HTL sector evolve in the past few years?

We have seen, especially recently, the ability of the industry to adapt to whatever is thrown at it. It will always continue to grow and adapt. As we can see, the industry has started to bounce back quite quickly from a global event like Covid. At Wyndham Destinations we have learnt new ways to connect with customers and we will continue to make a positive impact on their lives, no matter what situation we are confronted with.

What are you, and Wyndham Destinations, doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

Encouraging women to progress in the sector is a key focus of our company, whether that's within recruitment practices or day-to-day operations. We coach and develop our teams to make sure every team member has access to opportunities, and we have a wonderful Diversity Resource Group called Women in Travel. We encourage people to speak up and share their voices, and we have great access to resources such as webinars, podcasts and articles. There is always an opportunity to be involved.

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

This sector has so many opportunities on offer, which is what makes it so exciting! Within different forms of hospitality, travel and leisure, there is no limit to what you can do and where you can go. It is becoming more of a focus within the industry to grow and develop female leaders.



QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity, communication, honesty and passion.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"No matter what the weather is, always bring your own sunshine."

What is your favourite movie?

Chef.



Fabienne Lecuyer

Company **Elior France** / Job Title **Chief Procurement Officer**



I have worked in purchasing since completing my Master's degree in international purchase. I started my career with ten years in industry, followed by thirteen years at Club Med, a French travel and tourism company. Just before Elior, I worked for Invivo which

is the National Union of French Agricultural Cooperatives. Then I joined Elior, a world-leading operator for catering, as the CPO - Purchasing Director for Elior France.

I love that catering is a way to bring people together. We provide food for the most convivial part of the day: lunch. Obviously, food is our responsibility. But it is also about combining nutrition, taste and respect for the environment while making sure you have a good time with your colleagues.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

To dare. I often witness women doubting their legitimacy and legacy. If you are given an opportunity for promotion or change, it is because people think you are the right person for the job. So go for it.

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

I would say that diversity and inclusion, for me, is like mayonnaise. It needs the right blend of ingredients. For D&I, you need different skills, different backgrounds, different genders and different levels of experience. At Elior, we have KPIs for diversity and inclusion. For example, by 2025 we are aiming for 50% of our managers and 40% of our board members to be female. These are not just words; they are key objectives to reach.

“ You can never be bored working in HTL.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

You can never be bored working in HTL. You need to be innovative and anticipate change as a given – whether it's because of guests' habits, market evolution or the environment. You must always adapt your position. Covid, inflation, and shortages are the new challenges we need to continue adapting to address.

Furthermore, as a customer-oriented service sector, I enjoy being part of a business directly linked to people. And if you consider factors such as nutrition, climate change and the stakes in agriculture, the topics we



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Anne-Sophie Pic. She is a French chef and an international entrepreneur in a male-oriented industry.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Integrity, authenticity, and the ability to empower and lead by example.

Favourite book or film?

The original *Dune*. Its message about climate change is very important.

encounter in catering are aligned with some of the most significant challenges society faces.

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

Change is the new normal. We must adapt even though it's difficult to anticipate future crises. Covid has changed the

sector significantly. It has altered the way people consider their lunch break and working patterns: will you be at home or in the office? Climate change has also affected the availability of products, and how we consider our nutrition (plant-based proteins for example). These evolutions are big issues, especially for purchasing departments. It will be interesting to see how we work through these into the future.



Rie Lorentzen

Company **Ole & Steen** / Job Title **UK Head of Food**



I started early in the industry, working on pot wash and making prep back home in Denmark. I briefly studied Sports Science at Copenhagen University but hospitality had already got its claws in me so I decided to train to become a Chef.

I quickly got a job at Tivoli Gardens which led me to wagamama. I was part of the team that opened the first wagamama in the US. I moved to London and stayed with wagamama for around six years working as an Area Chef and Openings Chef. I have since held roles as Development Chef and Executive Chef with Whitbread, in brands such as Bill's, Bone Daddies and host kitchen start up Kbox.

Last year I joined Danish bakery Ole & Steen as Head of Food. It's been a great opportunity to be part of a Danish brand's growth here in the UK.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

I am not sure if I have one specific person, but I really admire people who have the courage and determination to start their own business. I think that is very brave, and great to see how something like a food truck can become a very successful brick and mortar restaurant business.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

The ability to be a mentor but at the same

time not to act like a superior. That they respect your knowledge and experience, especially if they have a different background.

What quote inspires you the most?

"A woman who knows what she brings to the table is not afraid to eat alone."

What is your favourite book or film?

Dirty Dancing! Or any book by Alexander McCall Smith.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't worry it will be fine. Go with your gut, it rarely fails you!

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

Diversity is one of the greatest things about hospitality. You meet people from all over the world with all sorts of backgrounds and personalities. When I came to London fifteen years ago, I was the only female Head Chef at wagamama on multiple occasions. That came with some challenges for sure, but it's always amazed me how the dynamic of the kitchen changes for the better as soon as you get more women in the kitchen.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

The teams! And the creativity when developing new products and dishes.

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

That's a tough question. It has never been easy to run restaurants and it is certainly not going to become any easier. Sometimes it feels like hard work and determination alone won't fix the issues we are facing at the moment. It's hard when it feels like doing all the right things, might not be enough.

I really hope we can get a better and more flexible Visa solution in place. We desperately need it.



Jessica Markowski

Company **Deliveroo** / Job Title **Director, QSR and Global Restaurant Brands**



I have worked in hospitality for eighteen years. I studied Biochemistry for my undergraduate and masters, however it was clear science wasn't for me. As an individual contributor, I am energised by engaging with people.

My career started in a commercial role within the healthcare industry and studied for my Wine and Spirit Educational Trust exams in the evening. I enjoyed the course so much I knew I wanted to make this my career. I joined Bacardi Brown-Forman Brands, then Anheuser-Busch InBev, in the Beer industry for 13 years. Working in hospitality means being part of a really strong community, and that is always something I've wanted to have in my work life.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Emma Heal, MD of Lucky Saint, for her fantastic networking skills.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Vision – functionally, for their team and for their team as individuals too.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

At a recent D&I conference I attended, Mariama Conteh from the M&M flagship store in London said 'I make it my point to make sure I leave a ladder behind me' in regard to opportunities for others.

What is your favourite book?

Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Thinking by Matthew Syed.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

The people are so passionate about what they do and that's because most people have an opinion about where they eat or what their local pub is like. When I give advice to my

team, I always say: you need to find your purpose and what makes you want to go to work. For me, it is 100% the people.

How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?

In terms of D&I in the



sector, it's not been great in the past but recently, we've had some very key role models step-up to help change that landscape. At a D&I conference I recently attended they spoke about how role models need to come in numbers to ensure they are representative, and that they need to actively help those up and coming in the industry. I think women are particularly good at doing this – wanting to identify ways they can help others progress.

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

At Deliveroo we are doing a lot in this space. One way to improve diversity is through recruitment. We have a representation rule which ensures that at least 50% of our senior level candidates come from diverse backgrounds, which is great for making sure you are reaching the right people. There

is a committee to check the rationale behind stages if we lose diversity through the process. This makes us all accountable for our decisions and limits bias. I have had the responsibility of being on that committee since my very early days at Deliveroo. We've also revisited all of our policies with an external consultant to make sure they consider a diverse range of perspectives. We've recently changed a lot of our maternity and paternity leave policies to be industry-leading.

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

This is not always an easy industry, so you need to make sure you feel that passion, because there will be days when it is hard. Keep an open mind and make sure you look for the opportunities that are right for you.



Helen Milligan-Smith

Company **Aramark** / Job Title **UK Managing Director**



While I was studying Law at University, I had been working in a large restaurant for Whitbread and I just fell in love with hospitality! When I finished my degree and was faced with the prospect of pursuing a career in Law, I decided I wanted to continue in hospitality.

I have been very fortunate to work in some of the UK's most special food businesses and I've enjoyed spending time and learning so much from the hospitality businesses I've worked in. I was Head of Retail at Greggs and then Corporate Director at Brakes. The latter company was acquired by US food giant Sysco, which I worked for following the acquisition. Most recently, I was Head of M&S Simply Food before joining Aramark two years ago as Managing Director of our business in the UK.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

One of Aramark's values is entrepreneurial spirit, and I love this value. No matter where you work or whom you are working for, you can always have a strong entrepreneurial spirit. So, my advice to my younger self would be to always challenge the status quo and be brave. Standing out for trying to think about things differently is always a really positive quality.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you, and mean in Aramark?

D&I for me means everybody being fully comfortable coming to work as their whole self. I've worked hard at Aramark UK to make sure that we have that genuine and authentic culture, and I think that's a key reason why we've had a number of brilliantly talented individuals join us over the last twelve months. Aramark UK is a place where you can be yourself and feel accepted whatever your background. We work hard and have a lot of fun too!

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

Working in the hospitality sector is such a privilege, being there for people's most special occasions which food is always at the heart of.

Every special occasion you go to and every time you're breaking bread with family, friends or colleagues – it just makes life a bit more special. Aramark UK is honoured to be a part of this in so many different industries and geographies.

Hospitality as an industry is a really close-knit, supportive community. And personally, I would never want to work anywhere apart from in food and drink. It is great to be able to do something that has a positive impact on people everyday.

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

I think the hospitality sector is changing and getting even better, because our clients want us to be much more integrated in their businesses. There is much closer collaboration now as we've become more important in their overall business strategy. It is fantastic to work with so many different brands. Whether it is going to Buckingham Palace, J.P. Morgan or Harry Potter World, there is always an exciting client to meet with a unique set of needs that we can support them with. Building strong partnerships is very important.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Kennedy McMeikan, he is CEO of Moto now and he has been a real inspiration for his stance on inclusivity.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Strategic and entrepreneurial spirit – someone who can make brave decisions.

Most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

At a global Aramark conference in the US recently, Harvard Professor Guhan Subramanian gave a fantastic presentation.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Keep your eyes on the stars, and your feet on the ground" – Theodore Roosevelt.



Erika Mixon

Company **Wyndham Destinations** / Job Title **Vice President of Marketing, Pacific ONE SoCal, Wyndham Destinations at Travel + Leisure Co.**



Marketing for Southern California. I started with Wyndham in 2005, which shows how much room there is to grow in the organisation.

I started as a tour receptionist, checking tours in, and I discovered my love for interacting with people. I held various roles from sales to recruiting, but truly found my place in Marketing. I marketed face-to-face in the beginning, eventually moving my way up to Vice President of



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Chris Faddick, who is SVP of Marketing at Wyndham Destinations.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Empathy and integrity.

What is your favourite book?

Take Back Your Power by Deborah Liu.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Whether you're interacting with the president or the janitor, treat everyone with the same level of respect." respect" – Ray Manabat, my dad.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

For me, two of the most fulfilling things about working in this sector are changing our consumers' lives and changing our associates' lives. Our mantra is that we put the world on vacation and we take this very seriously. When I walk into work everyday, I'm surrounded by vacationers spending quality time together and I'm proud to know the work we put in makes this happen. Secondly, this sector has changed my life and I have the

honour and privilege to pay that forward to those on my team. Seeing new associates starting their careers and have those careers flourish brings me so much joy.

What is Wyndham Destinations doing to drive the D&I agenda?

Our leaders have done an amazing job of putting focus on diversity and inclusion. We've held many roundtables and panels examining D&I and have a renewed focus on our diversity resource groups. I was invited to be on the board of directors for our

Women in Travel Diversity Resource Group earlier last year and since then, we are proud to have grown our membership count twice over. We focus on developing women through a business acumen series, panels with inspiring guest speakers, and we provide resources for our business practices. Our voices around D&I are louder than they've ever been.

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

It was very challenging for me at first to separate the highs and lows of production from my worth as a leader. I've learned that moments of failure are inevitable and defining who I am comes from the body of my work and

overall contribution. Once I accepted that succeeding in a big way also meant failing sometimes, I was able to lean into my role with so much more confidence.

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

This is an incredibly exciting sector with plenty of opportunity for growth and development. My industry provides a place for women to thrive and excel in their work while also supporting personal growth and I think that's the key to long term tenure. I enjoy variety and a challenge without sacrificing everything important to me outside of my career and this sector provides that.



Angela Moores

Company **SSP Group Plc** / Job Title **Chief Customer Officer**



I completed a business studies degree and travelled before joining a steel company as their first marketing Co-ordinator. What prompted me to move into hospitality was seeing an advert for a marketing job at Greenalls. I did a few years with Greenalls,

during that time I was picked out to support the Nomura team to sell the business. It was quite an intense piece of work, and it gave me a very good sense of what working in consultancy would look like and allowed me to get involved in senior conversations whilst at a reasonably junior level. I then spent a number of years with Greene King, working my way up from Category Manager to Commercial Director on the Greene King Managed Pub board. It was a great company to work for and I learned a lot about operations and the importance of our front-line colleagues in delivering a great customer experience.

After my maternity leave for my wonderful twins Ailsa and Murray, I joined PizzaExpress, and that's when I met some of the most talented women I've ever met, Zoe Bowley, Helen Charlesworth and Emma Woods. I then moved to SSP where I have been for nine years, starting as UK Commercial Director, moving on to Group Commercial Development Director, and I'm now Chief Customer Officer.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

This sector is very dynamic. There is lots of change, you meet lots of amazing people, and you have to grapple with many rollercoaster moments. What I love is, nothing stays the same. It is also a sector that you connect with very quickly - it is pleasurable and fun. You get to eat, drink, dance, and sing. Who wouldn't like it?

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be yourself! Don't try to be anybody else or compare yourself to anybody else.

Get to know what you're really good at. Understand the things that other people are better at and hire them to do those things.

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

SSP is a wonderfully diverse organisation, spanning 36 countries. Our colleagues and customers speak multiple languages and represent a vast cross-section of cultures. There are not many languages we don't speak.

My own team represents a rich diversity of talent, very



in tune with the nuances of travel and our regional variances.

The best part of the job is nurturing talent. I am really committed to supporting my team to realise their potential. I value everyone's diverse contribution and strive to harness the full value off team by getting them to bounce off each other and recognise each person's varying contribution to strengthen all that we do.

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

Customers continue to be sensitive to the prices they pay for the experience

they get. It's tougher at the moment, lots of people are starting to feel the pinch on their household income. We must ensure we give customers choice.

We need to add long-term value in terms of customer convenience, while remembering that 20 percent of customers do not want to engage in technology. There's nothing better than a smile in the hospitality industry.

You can't ignore how much momentum sustainability is gaining. We are strengthening our wellness propositions and are delivering significant sustainability commitments, to ensure we keep up with our customers expectations.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Kate Swann, former CEO of SSP, and Emma Woods, Chairman of Tortilla and former CEO of wagamama.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Communication and empathy.

Favourite book?

The Goal by Eliyahu M. Goldratt.

Bobbie Moreton

Company **Rare Restaurants** / Job Title **General Manager, Gaucho**



I fell into hospitality like a lot of people in our sector, caught the bug at a young age and never looked back. I was lucky to make amazing friends, had incredible role models, and found it a real escape from difficult situations growing up. A place where I was measured on my

commitment and passion rather than grades on a piece of paper. I really owe it to the industry for welcoming me and giving me amazing career opportunities.



What have been the biggest learnings in your career?

In my first GM role, I felt the pressure of being a young woman in the industry, many doubted my capabilities and ability to lead a team. There were times it was lonely and incredibly challenging, but I've learnt not to let anything faze me. Having a strong support system, looking after your mental health and having a purpose is key - you have to love what you do.

Unfortunately, like many others I still face elements

of sexism in my role today, often from guests. You must be resilient, hold people accountable and be an example for those around you, especially my team. Turning a negative situation into a positive one.

In your time in HTL, how have you felt the industry evolve?

Slowly we're making positive changes towards a more inclusive and balanced sector. Covid rocked hospitality, the silver lining is we addressed our imbalances. Our focus

on work life balance, mental health, substance awareness & even our unconscious bias in recruitment - it's a more inclusive place than it used to be. At Rare Restaurants, there's no judgement, there is a dedication to building a welcoming and sustainable culture for our teams, our teams are content and fulfilled.

What advice would you give to younger women entering the industry?

Trust the process and enjoy the journey! Believe in yourself, believe in your capabilities! You're going to have great moments in your career and you're going to have challenging moments, celebrate your success, your biggest wins come from the hardest challenges. Do the homework. Be so expert you're impossible to ignore. Be inspired by the network around you, Manchester is full of inspirational hospo women, I'm very lucky.

What's your favourite thing about working in HTL? And about working at Rare Restaurants?

Community! The community we have in our

team, and across the sector. We work long, unsociable hours in hospitality, and having like-minded people around you makes all the difference. The notion of a 'work family' gets a bad rep, as it has connotations of spending a disproportionate time at work. But we work Christmas, New Year, bank holiday, and our colleagues celebrate with us. In this case, having a work family is a wonderful thing. My favorite thing about working for Rare Restaurants is the people culture. I speak to all levels of senior leaders weekly, we feel empowered and supported.

What has been your experience of role modelling in the sector?

My industry role model is our Head of People, Julie Wilby. Julie has a phenomenal impact, she has over 1,000 team members on her books - she empowers everyone around her, despite being the busiest woman I know, she taught me that there is nothing more powerful than the time you give to someone else, she's fully present in every conversation.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Ambition, resilience, and having a clear and well-communicated vision.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Never be limited by

other people's limited imaginations."

What is your favourite book?

Charlie Mackesy: *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*.

Naj O'Dell

Company **PureGym** / Job Title **Divisional Director**



I started working in my local leisure centre as a cleaner and the more time I spent in the environment the more I wanted to be there. So I studied to be a Personal Trainer. My career turned into a passion when I became a health and fitness

manager for Fitness First and eventually I moved into a regional manager role with PureGym. I was in this role for seven years, helping the business to grow and develop to become the UK's leading gym operator and was then proud to be promoted to a Regional Director in 2020.

I count myself as very lucky to have made a successful career in health and fitness. It has been an amazing journey (one which I hope to enjoy for many years to come), being part of an incredible team at PureGym who make such an important difference to so many people across the UK day in day out. The business continues to grow and so I am still learning and developing personally, which has always been a big motivator for me.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

I like the idea of impacting people's lives, helping them get healthier and fitter. Particularly now, coming out of Covid, people are much more aware of their health, respiratory diseases and general wellbeing. To be able to provide people with

affordable, great quality fitness is very exciting. I get a sense of pride as members choose to spend their free time and income at PureGym.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in the past few years?

I remember opening club number 36 when I first joined PureGym. It was



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Rebecca Passmore, PureGym MD.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Trust and integrity are really important. Energy,

passion and a real transparent character who really cares.

What is a book you read recently?

The Confidence Code by Claire Shipman and Katty Kay.

a relatively small business then... we have over 330 today! D&I was not on the agenda officially then but has always been an inherent part of our culture. Today it sits at the heart of our business, for our colleagues, our members and our brand under our Everybody Welcome strategy. Most recently we launched our Employee Network groups to provide a platform to support a diverse range of communities within PureGym. We have a women's networking group which I'm the senior sponsor for and love being involved in, helping to showcase the great female talent we have, to inspire other women in the business and to help more people understand some of the challenges we must overcome.

What have you learnt the most from in your career?

When I first entered the industry, it was very male dominant, especially in the management teams. It has moved on hugely from then. Back then, I remember losing confidence if I was one of the only women in the room. It's easy to second guess yourself, but I learnt to feign confidence until I genuinely felt it. Fake it 'til you make it!

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

There are so many reasons! No two days are the same, you get people at their best, during their leisure time. Specifically here, you're giving people the opportunity to lead a healthier lifestyle. But also the people who work in HTL – they are so energetic and passionate.

“ I love helping to showcase the female talent we have.

Karen O'Rourke

Company **Flutter Entertainment Plc** / Job Title **Chief of Staff**



I have always had an interest in both the commercial and creative aspects of business, consciously designing a career around opportunities where I can apply and develop this blended skillset. My background is in marketing, predominately

in the tech sector, and pursuing a generalist career path (rather than a specialist route), has led me into my current role, as a Chief of Staff. It's a privileged position to be in at this stage of my career, sitting on the Executive Committee of a FTSE 30 organisation. My role involves partnering with, and learning from an accomplished CEO and ExCo, to develop and deliver strategic and tactical initiatives.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

The pace and complexity. The mindset, innovative thinking and discipline required to grow competitive businesses in this sector, responsibly and sustainably, make it incredibly appealing.

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

Change. In everything, from roles, levels and disciplines - to countries, companies, and industries. My career path has been full of change, at times within my control and at other times, not. It's been quite empowering to come to the realisation that all you can control is your response to change. Once you've accepted this fact and embraced it, it's quite fun. I've been fortunate enough to receive invaluable advice and guidance throughout my career, particularly during times of change - from leaders

and coaches, to family and friends - all of whom have been generous with their wisdom. I'd encourage everyone to seek similarly broad perspectives for themselves, and to also provide the same for others.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop?

I personally feel that we're finally reaching a collective clarity on the problems we're solving. The road to get here has been unhelpfully complicated and slow, but achieving this crucial step is a win. I'm encouraged by the foundational work I witness firsthand within my organisation, and particularly the listening and learning culture that is being thoughtfully fostered as part of Flutter's Positive Impact Plan. We need to do more, and most motivating for me currently, is the fact the ExCo and Board genuinely want to. The pace of progress undoubtedly needs to improve, so I'm looking



forward to amplifying the focus on action, over the coming months.

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

In all honesty, I understand why historically this sector hasn't been a top consideration for women. I've personally questioned and have been questioned on my own choices in joining (and rejoining). What I can say with confidence is that change is underway, and

this is a rare chance to lead and influence it, firsthand, alongside a growing number of allies, both men and women. Flutter provides unparalleled opportunities for growth, impact, learning, flexibility and mobility. All of this makes it a uniquely interesting and rewarding space to work.

While it may not be every woman's chosen route now or in the future, I look forward to it being considered as a credible, valuable, accessible option.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

A sense of self, responsibility, drive and humour.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"If not you, then who?
If not now, then when?"

What is your favourite book?

The 100 Year Life (Gratton & Scott), and *The Squiggly Career* (Tupper & Ellis), are books I've been gifted, and continue to gift to others. Combined, they're good inspiration for designing a life, personally and professionally, that you love.

Maddalena Padrin

Company **edyn** / Job Title **General Counsel**



I started working with clients in the HTL sector, including edyn, whilst still an associate at Taylor Wessing. Unlike traditional real estate, hospitality is a cashflow business. There are many components to driving value beyond the bricks and mortar: the skills of the management

team, brand appeal, the business model, the experience delivered to the guests. It makes for a fascinating asset class, where creativity and humanity blend with sophisticated financial modelling and investment skills. I joined edyn in May 2018, and no day has been the same since.



What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

At edyn, we are owner, developer and operator of our assets and brands. It is very rewarding to oversee the successful acquisition, design, development, financing and opening of Lockes and Coves across multiple jurisdictions in Europe. The best part however is seeing the “finished product” come to life with our guests and local communities, F&B operators, concept artists etc, all of which we bring into our guest experience. Our purpose at edyn is to create sanctuaries for soulful hospitality; after all the work that goes into our projects, it is very special to visit the properties and see the whole thing become real.

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

The industry is dynamic, exciting, and innovative. We are at a pivotal moment for the sector and seeing a lot of growth and progress on key issues such as diversity, community and ESG. The lasting changes brought about by the pandemic, the rising importance of sustainability, and the rise of hybrid hospitality concepts have all meant that the industry is interested in – and capable of – significant change. I've watched the sector transform in the past four years and find no reason not to expect the same in the next five.

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

The majority of workers in the sector are women, yet women are still having to push harder to advance professionally. At edyn we have explored various avenues as part of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to enhance inclusive opportunities; for example, our work with Saira Hospitality, a non-profit group focused on equipping individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, often women, with the tools they need to progress. We have also recently established a Women Network, supporting on specific issues and challenges for working women, and offering role models to our junior members.

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

We are seeing more brands testing the boundaries of conventional hospitality and experimenting with hybrid concepts, such as co-living and extended stays. My advice is to be curious and open-minded. Don't assume you know what is coming next. Learn to be comfortable outside of your comfort zone. Hospitality is a people thing, so developing a sense of community with your team is key for resilience and confidence.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Eric Jafari, Chief Development Officer and Creative Director at edyn, for his curiosity and deeply human approach to hospitality.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity and humility will create a genuine rapport and sense of trust with your team. Once you

have that nailed, you can achieve the impossible.

What quote inspires you the most?

“Creativity takes courage” – Matisse.

What is your favourite book or film?

I love Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* – on how human connections help finding the way back (and there is an iconic hotel in it too!).

Alyson Parkes

Company **Rare Restaurants** / Job Title **Impact Manager**



Hospitality and food have always been a big part of my life. Growing up, I worked in pubs and restaurants, all roles from being in the kitchen to front-of-house, and when I graduated from university, I realised I wanted to go back to that world. I had a degree in

Environmental Sustainability, which tied in nicely with the growing movement towards slow food and sustainable hospitality practices, which is my passion.

After a couple of roles in London – at the Sustainable Restaurant Association and Mintel – I went back to university, this time to Italy where I studied food culture, communication and marketing at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, founded by the Slow Food Movement. This gave me a great grounding for re-entering hospitality as Impact Manager at Rare Restaurants, focusing on sustainability.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Alice Waters, the US chef and restauranter who founded the farm-to-table movement.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Honesty. There's nothing more frustrating than

a leader who glosses over the details when things go wrong.

What is your favourite film?

A Life Less Ordinary.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Do or do not, there is no try" from Star Wars!

What is it that motivates you to work in hospitality?

To be honest, I want to make sure that restaurants and food businesses can survive! From a sustainability perspective, if the industry continues to operate in the way it is now, then food systems will be destroyed. So, I want to play a part in changing the way the industry is run because it is the right thing

to do, and also because I want to be able to go to restaurants myself! It's important to me that my professional life aligns with my values.

What does D&I look like in your organisation, and in your role?

One of the things I love about hospitality is how automatically diverse it is. In the workforce we have people from all over the



world, all with different backgrounds and cultures. Interestingly in my role, I have found that most of the people who are particularly interested in sustainability and what I do, are women and are all keen to learn more and get involved.

What advice would you give to a younger colleague entering the sector for the first time?

Firstly, I'd say don't let anyone pressure you into making a decision about your career before you are ready. There are so many opportunities, you can feel your way. It's a marathon not a sprint!

Secondly, I would say it is so important to understand that everyone does things differently. Don't try and approach every

professional relationship in the same way, take the time to get to know people and how they work.

What do you think the future holds for the sector?

Some things are changing fast, and others are staying the same. When it comes to restaurants and sustainability, the conversation hasn't evolved that much: the things I've been working on for the past ten years are the things I'm still working on today. But I feel a shift coming – for the first time, it's really quite tangible how the climate is impacting the industry and our supply chains. I hope that, looking ahead, sustainable practices won't be a differentiator, but the norm.



Louise Phillips

Company **Virgin Atlantic** / Job Title **Vice President – Customer Centres**



I began my career in HTL 20 years ago, when I secured my dream role as Cabin Crew with Virgin Atlantic and instantly fell in love with both travel and the HTL industry. Having grown up in rural Wales, I had a strong aspiration to travel and immerse myself in different societies and

cultures globally. After three years I needed to relocate back to Wales, so I made the difficult decision to leave my role at Virgin Atlantic. I spent the next five years in leadership roles in the recruitment and financial services sectors. Sadly, I missed the strong feelings of pride and belonging that I felt working at Virgin Atlantic and began to regret my decision to leave.

In 2010, Virgin Atlantic opened a new contact centre in my home city of Swansea, and the rest is history. I immediately re-joined as a team leader and, over the last 12 years, my career path has progressed from Operational Manager to Head of Customer Centres and more recently, Vice President of Customer Centres. My life has been incredibly enriched from working in the HTL industry. I often tell new recruits in the contact centre that I don't work in this sector for a salary; I work in HTL for the life experience. I have visited parts of the world that I could only have dreamed of if I had never embarked on a career in HTL. I have made life-long friendships all over the globe, with plenty of 'pinch me' moments over the last 20 years.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Perhaps an obvious one, but Richard Branson, for demonstrating that people who do not go to university can still achieve great things. Also, for demonstrating that being the underdog makes the winning so much more worthwhile.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

I value integrity, great self-awareness, trust, and honest communication.

Also, a leader who allows everyone in the team to be themselves, as I believe that it makes the team unique and brings great strength.

What quote inspires you the most?

"It always seems impossible until it's done"
- Nelson Mandela.

What is your favourite book or film?

My favourite book can change often, it's currently *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Your hard work really will pay off, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise; the fact that you do not have a university degree will not make you less likely to succeed and find a role that you love, and it will never feel like work!

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

A career in aviation/HTL means that you must learn to cope with the unpredictable, and crisis management is a critical part of the role. I have learned through my career, particularly through Covid-19, that I am a natural problem-solver who thrives on overcoming challenges that others believe will be impossible to solve. I am extremely calm in a crisis and no longer become fazed by unprecedented situations. I enjoy challenging the norm and driving a culture of curiosity to find a better way of doing things, and this has stood me and my team in good stead for any crisis that may come our way in future.

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

To me, diversity and inclusion means that people can proudly be themselves; no matter their gender, background, beliefs, the colour of their skin, their physical ability or who they love.

At Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Atlantic Holidays our beliefs are: be yourself every day, and work to be your best self; encourage your colleagues to be themselves, offer support and want the very best for people; build

an environment of conscious inclusion, where everybody feels that they are valued and belong; show curiosity about all differences, respect and understand them, and promote and reward people on merit alone, never discriminating.

How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?

During my time in the sector, the biggest change I had witnessed prior to the pandemic was the way customers' travel was being planned and executed. The days of holidays being booked as an end-to-end package with one travel company were becoming a thing of the past. Customers have become savvier with 'unbundling' a package deal and feeling more confident to de-couple flights and hotels to better suit their budget. The shift in customers wanting to self-serve was evident – they were becoming more open to Help Bots and Web Chat channels to obtain the information they needed.

That said, after over two years of Covid-19 restrictions and now a cost-of-living crisis, I have witnessed a significant shift change in the number of customers who now want to speak to a human, to get the reassurance they need after two years of being unable to travel. Multiple flight cancellations and travel restrictions throughout the pandemic has created a 180-degree shift in behaviour. I am interested to see if this customer behaviour will evolve as people regain their confidence with travel.

Kirsty Pitcher

Company **Domino's** / Job Title **People Director**



My career started in hospitality, although in Operations not HR. When I left university, I was a management trainee for what used to be Scottish and Newcastle, running pubs and restaurants. That was where I fell in love with the industry. I moved into

HR while I was still with that business – it was a move that combined the two things I was most interested in: people and the industry.

I was given the opportunity to move to Whitbread where I was excited to be involved with their diverse portfolio of hotels, coffee shops, restaurants and fitness centres. I then moved to Jaguar Land Rover, where I had some amazing years, which have carried me through the rest of my career to date. I was able to expand my global leadership experiences into China, India and the US. Before joining Domino's, I worked at Boots, marking my return to working with customer-facing colleagues who are doing the most important work in a business like ours – delighting customers! The opportunity to join Domino's was one I couldn't miss – a move back to hospitality and yet a new sector within that.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

I think Sarah Willingham, founder and CEO at Nightcap Plc, is a great role model for women who aspire to be successful entrepreneurs in this industry. I am also lucky enough to work alongside Sarah Barron and Nicola Frampton at Domino's who are amazing role models!

What qualities do you value in a leader?

The ability to listen and

the courage to make hard decisions.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen or heard recently?

I listen to Gabby Logan's podcast *The Mid•Point* when I go running.

What is your favourite book or film?

The best movie I've seen this year is *Top Gun: Maverick*. And my favourite book is *Shantaram* by Gregory Roberts.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

It is an industry where you can help people explore their potential in a way that isn't restricted. If you understand how to look after customers, and understand how the business sustains profitability, then the possibilities in hospitality are truly endless. Hard work, common sense, initiative, and enthusiasm will take you places.

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

We have to work harder as an industry to give our colleagues meaningful experiences. We should start focusing on providing compelling opportunities for people at entry-level, to encourage people to consider our industry as offering a career for life.

We have to listen to what is important to our colleagues rather than assuming we know the answer. We're attracting a different type of person to the industry now, and we have to listen to them when they tell us what they want from their careers.

“ Hard work, common sense, initiative, and enthusiasm will take you places in this sector.”

What are you, and Domino's, doing to encourage women to progress in the sector?

The Domino's Board and Executive Leadership Team have some great women amongst them. On top of that, we're looking for other ways in which we can support women progressing through the organisation, for example with mentoring programmes and continued ways to help everyone balance responsibility in and out of work.

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

Be yourself! I spent many years trying to craft a version of myself that I thought I needed to be, and it was liberating to realise that I am enough. Finding people who can be advocates on your behalf can make such a difference.



Briony Raven

Company **Pret A Manger** / Job Title **Global Transformation Director**



I have long since had a deep love for people and food! Having studied Business at Cardiff University, my first job gave me an insight into the hospitality industry, with my most loved client - Pret A Manger. The emotions I felt when I visited them were inspiring – the food,

the culture, the people. I was thrilled to be offered a job as their Packaging Manager. Before I knew it, I was working with an incredibly talented group, delivering a series of strategic projects centered around coffee in Hong Kong, Paris, New York & London. Following a couple of maternity stints, including a promotion two weeks prior to going on leave with my second child (Pret has operated a culture of inclusion for as long as I can remember), I returned as Global Director of coffee.

More recently, for two years I held the role of UK Food & Coffee Director, in perhaps the most turbulent of times, a global pandemic. Innovation has never been more important, and this role saw me lead the launch of the "Pret Coffee Subscription". This is a role I have long admired from afar, so it was a huge privilege. Since February of this year, I have thrived on being Pret's Global Transformation Director. Working with the Global Leadership Team, I am responsible for working with teams across multiple markets to deliver our growth ambitions whilst we continue to transform ourselves to a multi-channel business.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Clare Clough – UK Managing Director, Pret A Manger.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Inspirational, empathetic, and honest, with the ability to listen.

Most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

Read *The 5 AM Club* by Robin Sharma. Brilliant

advice in there about how to help to make the best decisions by getting you in the physical and mental state to do so. I found it invaluable with the demanding schedules of work, life and parenthood!

What quote inspires you the most?

"I hope you live the life you are proud of. If not, I hope you have the strength to start all over again" – Eric Roth.



“ Hospitality is an industry filled with incredible people that are working in a fast-paced and demanding environment.

with kindness when people sometimes don't get it right.

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

I think like many people in hospitality, Covid will be one of the most challenging periods of our personal and professional experiences. I have learnt that the perfectionist in me means "good" can be enough. I have learnt that as cliché as it sounds, putting on your oxygen mask first, enables you to be stronger for the professional and personal demands of work and life.

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

Hospitality is an industry filled with incredible people that are working in a fast-paced and demanding environment. This enables you to constantly learn. No day is ever the same and being in a customer-centric environment means it constantly evolves, as do you with it!

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

People and Customers. I love happy people in the workplace, and I love happy customers. I find it incredibly motivating to think of ways to improve both.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in the past?

Pret has always created an environment that allows people to be themselves. I feel lucky to have been part of that environment for much of my career. We all have something to learn. I see people educating

Kate Ross

Company **Fuller, Smith & Turner Plc** / Job Title **Operations Manager**



Thirteen years ago, I arrived in the UK from New Zealand.

I was never planning to stay long, then I got my first job which was bar team at a pub in Isleworth. I hadn't worked in hospitality before and quickly developed a passion. I worked my way

up to deputy manager, and then an opportunity at Fuller's came my way. I joined the company in 2012 and moved into running five sites across London. My standout was the Turks Head, Twickenham. While I was a General Manager I took part in Fuller's Deputy Operations Manager development course and did a variety of leadership and skills training related to the role. This journey has led me to my current position of Operations Manager for Fuller's looking after 13 fabulous pubs and hotels.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

The people I've met along the way and the relationships I've built. Coming over from New Zealand on my own, Fuller's and the industry has given me friendships, family and a career. Being part of a family is one of Fuller's values and I certainly feel like we live by it.

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

I can see from my ten years at Fuller's that we are all equal here and I believe we will continue in that. I personally think there are further opportunities for us to employ more team members with learning and physical disabilities. If we could raise more awareness of what great employees they can be in our teams it would make such a difference to the industry.

How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?

The team of Operations Managers I work in has an equal gender split. This is a real contrast to when I first joined Fuller's ten years ago, when the team was very male dominated. I am the first female Operations Manager some of my female Managers have ever worked with. They love the fact we can have open conversations, whether it is about their personal life, about the physical things women go through, or even just having a chat!

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

Never let anyone tell you that you cannot do anything because you are a woman. We can do anything men can do and normally do it better! If you feel that you are treated differently you are certainly not working in the right company.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

It's hard to pick just one, I've worked with so many wonderful people during my time in hospitality.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Empathy, honesty, emotional intelligence and communication.

What quote inspires you the most?

"A boss has the title. A leader has the people" – Simon Sinek.

What is your favourite book or film?

Legacy by James Kerr. It's about the All Blacks and their team philosophy: "Sweep the Sheds – never be too big to do the small things that need to be done."



Miriam Roughsedge

Company **ODEON Cinemas Group** / Job Title **Head of Food and Beverage, UK and Ireland**



I'm lucky to have had a broad history when it comes to service and retail. In my early twenties, I started off working in the import industry, where I focused on developing and importing goods from the Far East to the UK. It was such an amazing experience, getting to

travel out to China and working trade fairs at such an early stage in my career. Next, I moved into retail working as a buyer for The Co-op where I spent close to ten years. I had lots of opportunities for career development there, and progressed through the commercial structure and hierarchy, mostly working on the fresh food and own label business.

At the end of 2017 I joined ODEON, coming in as senior category manager and progressing quickly to head of department. I wanted to gain experience working with big brands like Coca-Cola, Mondelez and Nestlé, and to develop my skill set by trading across a completely different sector. It's been a fantastic experience and I've learned so much!



What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

Specifically for ODEON, there is so much to be excited about. Who doesn't love the cinema? One of the most satisfying elements of my trade is that people choose ODEON and we are part of their day out. Life is really hard at the moment, so I see it as a big responsibility but a great pleasure to bring movie magic to our guests.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in the past few years?

Over the last two years specifically, it's been fantastic to see the profile of D&I increasing. I've benefitted from some great mentoring and coaching experiences in the past and I really want to make sure I'm giving those same experiences to upcoming talent. My involvement with the ODEON internal mentoring scheme, which has global coverage, is allowing me to do this.

I'm also a member of our DEI working group forum that supports with sexuality, gender and family status. We have great discussions around raising awareness,

educating and supporting colleagues to remove barriers to progression.

In my experience, ODEON are incredibly progressive when it comes to championing the D&I agenda. I feel fortunate to be part of such a forward-looking business.

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

Lockdown was the most challenging moment for us, dealing with the uncertainty of not knowing when we could open again. As a leader, how could I keep my team motivated and connected?

It challenged me in terms of business strategy, and structure, moving from real strategic thinking into a tactical day-to-day space.

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

It is so rewarding to be part of that more experiential side of the market, and the fact that our customers 'choose, not use' us as part of their day out. There is more innovation and creativity in this sector than I have experienced anywhere else.



QUICKFIRE

Who would you consider to be a role model?

Jacinda Ardern.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Openness. It's so important for your team to be able to speak to you and to be able to share their views. It builds a real willingness to continuously learn and grow.

What quote inspires you the most?

"If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, it's a duck!" – Robin Cook.

What is your favourite film?

Top Gun: Maverick. The film of the year.

Samantha Rowley-Corns

Company **Forest Holidays** / Job Title **Head of Retail, Food and Beverage**



At university I did a law degree and worked part-time in retail. After graduating I worked as a Manager for Topshop and absolutely loved it. It was a role with Merlin Entertainment that eventually brought me into the HTL sector, and now I've been with Forest

Holidays for the last seven years and have been lucky to have held a few different positions outside of commercial. Being a General Manager and a New Openings Manager in HTL has given me opportunities to learn so much about operations and has broadened my skills beyond commercial. It's given me so much insight into how all of these things need to connect to deliver the best results.

The thing I love about the HTL sector is how being in a team means everything. There is nothing better than seeing people thrive and develop – but I'm also numbers-focused and get a real buzz from driving sales and overachieving targets.



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

I think I would probably be in design, so maybe an architect or even an engineer. I'm lucky enough to lead on design projects at Forest Holidays, such as our new-style Forest Retreat in Delamere Forest. I love seeing big projects take shape and admire women who are leading the way in unrepresented sectors.

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

I am lucky to work for a business which embraces inclusivity, making sure that every employee feels at home with us and knows that they can make an impact. I am passionate about developing other women and encouraging them to be themselves. Most of our leadership team are women, so I feel very supported and part of something really special. It is just about making sure that the women in our business get to the board level now.

What would you say to someone who is unsure if the HTL sector is for them?

Do not be afraid to be yourself. The HTL sector is a great place to embrace who you are. Particularly if you are a woman entering the sector, be yourself and take up every opportunity that comes your way. We have some fantastic qualities we can bring to any role. And if you like learning, this industry gives you lots of opportunities to learn about different parts of business.

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

You are not going to get in trouble for trying something but you could miss out if you don't, so be bold and do not be afraid to make mistakes. Learn from them and take calculated risks. Also, find your role models and learn from them. I have been part of WiHTL's Global Female Leader Programme and was so inspired by Pippa Wicks who came to share her story with us. I found it so refreshing to hear how somebody with her seniority prioritises space to be herself. It's stuck with me, and I often tell myself 'If Pippa Wicks can do it, you can do it'.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Mary Portas.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity, empathy and a sense of humour.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

The High Performance Podcast with Jake Humphrey.

What is your favourite book or film?

Labyrinth, it is a classic.



Stacey Rush

Company **SSP America** / Job Title **Director of Design, Construction and Integration**



Early in my career when I worked for a marketing research firm, I had the opportunity to connect with people in the hospitality and travel sector and was intrigued by the rapid growth of the industry, the stability and the limitless opportunities that it had to offer. I made

the decision to jump headfirst into a contracting role that would become the foundation of my career path. Now, I'm a member of the design and construction team at SSP America, overseeing the capital projects contracting, compliance, and project administration. Alongside this, I lead outreach efforts to identify vendors and suppliers to ensure SSP America maximises the involvement of minority groups, women, and disadvantaged business enterprises in the design and construction process. No two days are the same and I face new challenges every day, which helps to build my knowledge and expertise.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Embrace the mistakes. They're just steppingstones to your success.

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

I believe that I have learned mostly from the

challenge of timing and patience in my career. I've learned that timing is everything. What one may desire at the moment may not be what they need. I've experienced what I "thought" were setbacks in my career only to find that they were set-ups for long term career success.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Empowerment, communication and empathy.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

I recently read a New York Times Bestseller titled *The 12-Week Year* by Brian P. Moran and Michael Lenington. This book teaches you how to get more done in 12 weeks than others do in 12 months.

What quote inspires you the most?

"Don't ever make decisions based on fear. Make decisions based on hope and possibility" – Michelle Obama.

What is your favourite book or film?

Favorite Film is *The Devil Wears Prada*. It teaches you how to navigate a difficult work environment with a few laughs along the way.

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

Diversity is the difference in culture, age, gender, race, ethnicity etc. Inclusion is being open to those differences and allowing them to be present and represented in all levels of the business. An organisation that embraces D&I only enhances its ability to relate and connect with the customers and communities it serves.

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

I believe HTL has changed significantly since my entrance into the industry 17 years ago. The ability to advertise via social media outlets allows for quick messaging and advertising to its customers. Due to this shift, we have also witnessed an increase in the

everyday traveller over the years. While traveling has become more accessible and affordable, HTL has seen a significant increase to its bottom line.

The future is bright for the industry. I believe we will continue to think of ways to make traveling easier by implementing better and faster technology, reducing wait times and enhancing the experience.

What is your experience of role modelling in the sector?

I'm happy to say I do not have just one role model in the industry, I have many. In fact, too many to name. All the wonderful and inspirational people that mentored me, pointed me in the right direction or simply encouraged me to follow my dreams are all people I look up to. They are a critical part of my career history and journey, and I am forever grateful.



Monique Samra

Company **Fuller, Smith & Turner** / Job Title **People Experience Manager**



My role at Fuller's is my first within hospitality. It was great to do something that I was initially unfamiliar with. I joined the team as People Experience Manager, and have had the freedom to shape it as I see fit.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Michelle Obama.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Honesty and integrity.

What is your favourite book?

Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before by Dr Julie Smith.



What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

What I find really special is the connection to people – hospitality is all about that customer experience. And you can feel that warmth from our colleagues, which is an innate quality that Fuller's is fantastic at nurturing.

One of our values is being part of the family, and Fuller's is exactly that. All of our teams within our support centre, our pubs and hotels work together to achieve the best, and that's what makes it a fulfilling place to work. We

are great in supporting one another to always strive for the best and always be the best version of ourselves – that's what a family does.

How are you approaching driving a D&I agenda?

To many people, the work around diversity, equality and inclusion is so new and vast, and there is so much that most of us still don't know, so it is important that we understand this area better through the training. From Exec level down to frontline members, we talk about the value and power of listening – and also the importance of having open conversations.

“ We encourage our team members to voice their opinions – if no one's talking, we can't listen.

We encourage our team members to voice their opinions – if no one's talking, we can't listen.

When I set out the inclusion framework, I was very passionate about making sure it was right for our business, not just a tick-box exercise. Getting managers on board for change beyond gender or racial diversity is crucial. We are looking at all aspects of diversity and inclusion and began with a data collection campaign to understand differences in our business so that we can make sure we represent people properly and fairly. All of the work we are doing in this space is underpinned by our strong company values, which are weaved throughout.

When our pubs were closed during the pandemic, our Chief Executive was committed to continuing with our

work on D&I, regardless of whether our pubs were trading or not.

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

We have around 200 managed pubs across the south of the UK and being able to communicate with everyone effectively can be a challenge – particularly due to the fact that our frontline team members don't have work email addresses. So we have to rely on personal emails. Finding creative ways to engage with the many generations we have in our business is also a challenge.

What advice would you give to the next generation of women who are considering a career within HTL?

I have been in working in the hospitality industry for nearly three years now and there has not been one day which I haven't enjoyed. It's an infectious industry where you can achieve anything you set out to. But I would hope that people look at me and feel inspired that they too can be part of positive change and make a difference in creating a culture of belonging for all.

Hannah Schnadt

Company **Whitbread Plc** / Job Title **Head of Financial Control – UK & Germany**



I graduated from the University of Bath with a Business Administration degree and started my career at PwC, qualifying as a chartered accountant. Following an 18-month secondment to Cape Town, South Africa, I returned to PwC's consulting division in London consulting on

a wide range of businesses and industries including retail, healthcare and financial services focusing predominately on target operating models.

After eight years at PwC, I decided to make the move into an industry and joined Whitbread as it was an attractive FTSE 100 hospitality business innovating in the UK as well as expanding into the German market with lots of different opportunities.

What is the most fulfilling thing about working in HTL?

People are definitely something special about this industry, particularly within our business. Employing over 35,000 people in over 1,200 Premier Inn hotels and restaurants across the UK, and serving over four million customers every month, people are at the heart of our business. This really translates into a positive, collaborative working environment. Also, the variety and pace whether it be colleagues, customers, or situations!

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

The biggest challenge has come from my role, remit and team expanding significantly over the past six years at Whitbread. There are areas that I am now responsible for which I never would have thought of when I started! Whilst

challenging, it has been extremely rewarding with many fantastic opportunities to grow and apply my skill set.

How have you seen the D&I agenda develop in the past few years?

Whitbread has made significant progress in the time I have been with the company, whilst still recognising that there is more to do. We have a 'Women in Finance' workstream where I have contributed to sessions by sharing and discussing my experiences as well as mentoring women in both a formal and informal capacity. I have also been a 'buddy' to support women who are on maternity leave and are due to return to work.

Personally, I think role models are so important to advancing diversity and inclusion – it is important that women can look around our industry and see other women like



them and know that they can aspire to senior roles. I have two young children (18 months and three years) and have been incredibly well supported throughout my maternity leave but also on my return to work. I work part time three days a week – this was an important principle for me when coming back to work and I honestly didn't think it would be an option in a senior

leadership role based on my own misconceptions. However, with the right support, it has worked well, and I believe that the more flexible a business / industry can be, the more talent you can attract and retain. I really want to be a role model to other women by doing my job, to show that they can also do the same. Diverse leadership and teams also generate stronger business results.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Alison Brittain, our current CEO.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity, and the ability to be motivating and adaptable.

What is your favourite book?

Legacy by James Kerr, which includes one of my

favourite quotes: "leave the jersey in a better place."

What is the most interesting thing you have read, seen or heard recently?

Good night stories for rebel girls – a children's book with 100 bedtime stories about the lives of extraordinary women from the past and the present.

Clara Shand

Company **C&C Group** / Job Title **GB Commercial Director**



I started my career working with dairy products at Danone before moving into the spirits industry and subsequently beer and cider – joining C&C, where I have worked for the past nine years. I have been fortunate to work in a variety of roles across the

UK and Republic of Ireland, as the business has grown into the leading brand owner and drinks distributor it is today. While I have worked in many different categories and channels throughout my career, I have a love for hospitality. Hospitality is a community, not only all of us who work in hospitality industry but the venues themselves. They are at the heart of their local communities which is incredibly important to me.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be yourself! It is your power. Don't try to be something or someone else other than yourself. I spent years at the start of my career not sharing that I am dyslexic, losing evenings and weekends trying to convert my way of thinking into what I thought was required. I eventually came to realise that my way of thinking and approaching things adds a different dimension and is valuable.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

Diversity and inclusion is about everyone being able to be who they are – it's that simple for me. You should be able to be exactly who you are, and not be limited.

Are you noticing increased conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion in the workplace?

Yes - I have the privilege of being the chair of C&C's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion advisory group, and we are seeing a lot more conversations and

questions surrounding diversity and inclusion taking place. There is much more openness and vulnerability being demonstrated, people are becoming more respectfully curious. It is incredibly important to create safe spaces and cultures where everyone can have their voice heard. Having role models within the business to inspire people to speak up is hugely valuable.

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

A personal challenge for me, was learning to understand my own value, and the last couple of years specifically, have presented challenges from both a personal and a professional perspective. It has helped a lot of us to gain clarity on how important the individual is as part of the collective. It has prompted us to really understand people's unique circumstances. It has been a very worthwhile challenge, and I think it's fundamentally changed the way that organisations view people.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Being authentic, being open, and nurturing personal development.

Who is your industry role model?

Laura Catena who leads the Catena Wine business.

What is the most interesting thing you have read, seen or heard recently?

John Amaechi's speech at the WiHTL Inclusion Summit was a huge lightbulb moment for me.



Emma Sidlow

Company **Stagecoach** / Job Title **Head of Finance Business Partnering**



I studied History of Art at university and when I graduated, I decided to pursue a career in finance. I started as a Trainee at Simply Health before moving to the Co-op where I worked for 12 years. It was when I decided to look for my next step that I came across Stagecoach.

It ticked all the boxes so I applied for the role and I haven't looked back. Stagecoach recognises talent and I have been in various talent pools since I joined in 2019. I am part of the Shine pool now and was lucky to join the WiHTL Global Female Leaders programme in January for six months.



QUICKFIRE

What is your favourite book?

Frida: The Biography of Frida Kahlo, by Hayden Herrera.

Who is your industry role model?

Michelle Hargreaves,

one of our Regional Directors, who retired this year.

What quote inspires you the most?

"If you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything."



Recognise your value – I would have loved to have done that earlier in my career.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Recognise your value – I would have loved to have done that earlier in my career. If I could go back to when I was entering the business world, I would say don't be shy and ask for what you want.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you?

Diversity and inclusion have been important to me for my whole career, and it's great to see those values now coming into the spotlight. I've always tried to prioritise collaboration, kindness and the consideration of others – both in my decision making and my ways of working. These values are now so relevant to the great strides that we are seeing in our diversity agenda.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

Public transport is integral to so many communities, and I can see great value in what we do. We contribute to the economy by getting millions of people to work, university, college and appointments every day, as well as contributing to leisure, shopping and retail. We can also contribute to the move towards net zero: the more people who travel by bus or public transport the better.

How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?

I have seen great changes since I joined the HTL world in 2019 and I think that the pandemic accelerated these changes. In particular, I have seen greater visibility of women in leadership roles at Stagecoach. We now have a female UK MD, Regional Director and great female representation on the Board. It has been wonderful to be a part of the change and to be a role model.



Emma Simmonds

Company **Deliveroo** / Job Title **VP, Consumer & Pricing**



After graduating and spending a few years in a sales role, I joined the Civil Service fast stream. I then spent almost a decade at the Treasury, which included spending two and a half years as the Chancellor's speechwriter and private secretary. I worked with

George Osborne during the 2015 election and the Brexit referendum, followed by six months working for Philip Hammond. I then led a team advising Ministers on the changes required at the border for businesses if we leave the EU Customs Union, which involved lots of trips to visit Dover, Calais and the Channel Tunnel!

After a long time in Government I decided I wanted to take on a new challenge in the private sector, and Deliveroo seemed like the perfect fit. I admired the way it opened up the opportunity for restaurants who didn't do food delivery to gain access to a whole new customer base and provide flexible work for riders. I came to Deliveroo to set up the policy function, which I ran for a couple of years before having my daughter. Leading policy at Deliveroo gave me a fantastic chance to speak to governments around the world about the opportunities provided by on-demand work, as well as other important policy issues like healthy eating, emissions and the tech sector. Since I've been back from maternity leave, I've run Global Rider Operations and now I run the Consumer and Pricing Org in HQ which I'm really enjoying.



QUICKFIRE

Most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

An article in *The Economist* about Elon Musk's Twitter takeover.

Favourite book or film?

A Fine Balance by Rohinton Mistry.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Integrity and authenticity.

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

I would probably be in another industry that brings people together. My husband co-owns a few pubs and we're both passionate about the hospitality and events industry.

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

I've always felt that the role I need to play is one concerning visibility. I work 4 days a week which is unusual at a senior level in our industry, and so I try to champion flexibility, given its importance to working parents in particular.

I think that in the interests of advancing diversity in the sector, the more people at all levels that are honest and open about who they are, the more possible it is for other people to do that themselves.

We've got a lot of different mentoring programmes in Deliveroo. I mentor a lot of up-and-coming

younger women in the business. I also have some previous mentees from the government that I continue to support.

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

Identify the senior leaders you find inspiring and reach out to them. It's very rare that people won't make time for the next generation, and I think everyone realises that you get where you are through the sponsorship and support of other people.

What has been your experience of role models in the sector?

I've watched female leaders who are more senior than me in this industry do fantastic work. And I'm proud to see Deliveroo acting as a role-model for other businesses by regularly promoting outstanding women while they're on maternity leave - which shouldn't be unusual but unfortunately still seems to be.

Helen Smith

Company **Dorchester Collection** / Job Title **Chief Customer Experience Officer**



I always wanted to work in hotels, and was intrigued by the idea of looking after people. I came in through a marketing route, after studying at Cornell in the US and becoming completely inspired by a temporary professor there who was teaching the subject. Marketing

made sense to me: if you get the right offer, to the right person, at the right time, then you'll be successful. I'm now in my fifteenth year at Dorchester, and I love it because I feel simultaneously comfortable in my surroundings, but challenged in my role, with lots of opportunity to grow.



If you weren't in the HTL sector, where do you think you'd be?

I'd probably be teaching, as I love interacting with people. In lots of walks of life – especially teaching – you don't have to be the best at something, you just have to be a good communicator. And I pride myself on the fact that if I understand something, I can explain it to somebody else. Some of my proudest moments in my professional life have been working with people who previously struggled to grasp a concept and watching them shine.

What has been your experience of role modelling?

I guess my father was my first role model. He worked for an oil company, and would say "I don't care who you are, I don't care what you look like, if you can do the job – then you're hired." So I really grew up with that mentality. Now, I try to emulate my father's approach to leadership. In the industry, I've worked for some excellent people. I've found that if you gain people's respect early on, then you're granted a high level of freedom and independence.

How are you advocating for and supporting women in your career?

One of the things I love doing in my role is bringing people on the journey with me. If you go alone you can go far, but if you go with people you can go further, and sometimes I feel like I've got a duty to support people – especially women – and to help them excel.

Women can often be lacking in confidence, especially if they're working in a male-dominated environment, and I try to act as a role model to them. I want to show them that their voice matters.

What advice would you give to someone who is considering entering the HTL sector?

I would say always push yourself to be a voice in the room, don't run away from danger, and to never stop learning. But also – do your homework and stop speaking at the right time!

Ultimately, the more things you can tick off your list of experiences, the better. So try not to feel constrained by one field, job, or industry. But also don't think that you have to move around to try new things – I've been with Dorchester for 15 years, continually changing roles and growing my skills.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Having vision, being compassionate, and being able to deal with confrontation.

Is there a quote which inspires you?

The motto from the Olympics: "Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together."

What is your favourite book?

My favourite book has to be Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.



Paula Stevenson

Company **Sodexo** / Job Title **Managing Director - Corporate Services UK&I**



I'm one of those really lucky people who fell into facilities management and never looked back. I started my career in accountancy and then was given an opportunity to go into ops. I joined the industry over 25 years ago. I've worked both client side

and supplier side during my career which has supported my development and career progression.

I currently work for Sodexo. This is my third time working with the company. Coming back to Sodexo, I joined as a Global Account Director, and I was leading one of the largest Global Strategic Accounts which is an accredited Vested Contract. About a year ago, I moved into my current role Managing Director within Corporate Services in the UK.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

First, be brave and don't be inhibited by other people's ignorance and views, the unconscious bias is real and we need to continue to educate those around us. Just believe in yourself. And secondly, especially for working parents, stop carrying the guilt. Those would be the two things I would tell my younger self.

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

For me, it's not just about D&I, it's also about equity. And I believe as leaders we have a responsibility to create an environment where people can be their best self – a place that's inclusive and where everybody can thrive. One of the reasons I returned to Sodexo is the company's commitment to the DE&I agenda. It's simply in our DNA, it's part of who we are. Because we have very ambitious commitments on this agenda, there's a lot more that needs to be done.

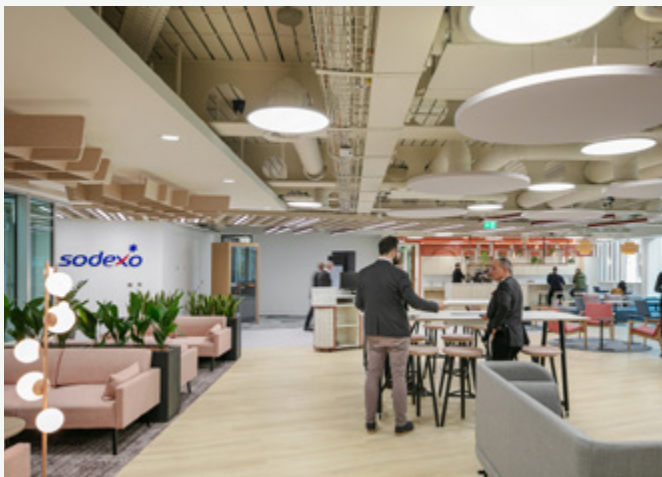
What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

For me, it's all about the

people. It's about the team, my team and the wider team, consumers and working with customers. I have the privilege to be in a role where I can interact with people from different countries and different cultures. Simply listening to and learning from them enriches and inspires me every day. Particularly at Sodexo, it is rewarding to see people develop their careers, sometimes in directions that they didn't think were possible or hadn't even imagined before. I just love seeing people flourish in the right environment.

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 perception has changed incredibly around our industry, which I think is wonderful because it will attract all sorts of people that it never did before. It's evolving even more quickly post-Covid as we actually don't know what the workplace of the future is going to be. We therefore have a chance to reinvent what our customers and consumers might need. The challenge brings innovation and digitisation to the forefront.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, because I believe she was a true visionary and ahead of her time.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Authenticity, inspiring, thoughtful and being visible.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Be courageous. It's one of the only places left uncrowded" – Anita Roddick.

Most interesting thing you've seen recently?

A TED talk by Simon Sinek, called Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe.



Lou Thomas

Company **Haven** / Job Title **People Director**



Before entering the HTL sector I started my career in retail as a Sales Assistant in department stores. I was the Store Manager for Habitat on the King's Road and then I spent quite a few years at Boots working in operations and HR. I was a General Manger and then Regional

Manager based in London and the South. I moved into the HR space, working on the link between customer and team experience at Boots, as Head of Learning and Development for the UK and Ireland.

I entered the HTL sector looking for new opportunities. I was headhunted into Bourne Leisure and now I've been with them for seven years.

What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

Without a doubt it is working with the team I have. Our work is challenging and most of our team are in entry level positions. They are so proud and work very hard to deliver memories to our guests, we all talk about how holidays are intrinsic to the fabric of a family.

“ I hope that the sector will gain recognition for the amazing opportunities it offers when someone starts at entry level.

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

As someone who is a champion of career development, I hope

that the sector will gain recognition for the amazing opportunities it offers when someone starts at entry level. This is also important for creating a diverse workforce, especially when it comes to people moving from adjacent sectors. HTL is accessible, exciting, and varied.

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

At Bourne we have created an I&D Board that supports our leaders and team to deliver our plan. We call it I&D at Bourne because we want inclusion to be the priority. As HR Director, there is a lot for me to focus on in terms of careers accessibility. We are growing through our Early Careers programme and looking at underrepresented areas of the UK population to support in terms of employability, partnering with Blackstone. And as a female leader, I feel a responsibility to improve

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

I take inspiration from different people for different reasons. I've worked with some incredibly talented people and I try to borrow with pride. I admire committed, smart, emotionally intelligent and innovative people and I believe in a positive work ethic, which I learnt at an early age from my Dad!

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Courage, curiosity and vulnerability.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

The impact of the menopause on female talent.

What is your favourite book or film?

Slightly eclectically, The Godfather and Room with a View are my favourite films. *The Choice* by Edith Eger had a huge impact on me.

the gender balance of leaders, as well as discuss how women's careers can be impacted by key life stages.

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

You have a responsibility. Don't be a bystander. Never underestimate the power of speaking up, and creating pathways

of opportunity for other people. Believe in yourself, know your self-worth, find what makes you feel fulfilled, and have a good time!

One of the best lessons I learnt in my early career came from an Area Manager when I was a Store Manager. He taught me to get people to be engaged in me before I tried to get them engaged in what I was saying.



Donna Vass

Company **Aramark** / Job Title **HR Director Global Offshore**



I started my career in a managerial role in retail. I naturally came to a crossroads to narrow my focus to either finance or people. I jumped at the chance of working in HR, went to university and have cultivated a 25-year career in HR. I live in Aberdeen, Scotland – the hub of the

UK Offshore energy industry where inevitably you end up working in the energy field and so I work in the Offshore sector and hospitality.

I have a very special relationship with Aramark. I re-joined four years ago, after working here twice before. Initially, a number of years ago, in a temporary position where I fell in love with the company and the people. I was delighted to return to the role I'm in now, and to a lot of the original people – that tells you something about this company and its ethos.



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

Definitely in HR, I love my job, and made the right decision all those years ago. And definitely in Aberdeen. I feel like I was born in the absolute right place in the world for me. Probably down to the climate and all the rain we get!

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

I am an advocate for all things diverse; I feel very strongly that it is the individual who makes the contribution, regardless of their background. I think particularly on my journey, I've seen that when you're the only woman in the room, you have a different viewpoint and being in a room full of people who are willing to listen to that different viewpoint and alter their train of thought is very rewarding.

For women just starting in their careers, or beginning to develop their own passions, try to understand the different aspects of our industry and how you can make the difference. My focus is people, I aim to make sure we are

embracing everyone, watching each person travel their own journey and encouraging them to get involved in things that will stimulate and challenge them.

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

Always reach for something that is slightly beyond your capability. If you're applying for a new position/promotion or playing a role in a project, step forward and let your voice be heard. It will challenge you to gain more experience in different areas. Having the passion and enthusiasm to go outside of your comfort zone will get you noticed.

What has been your experience of role models and role modelling in the sector?

I had a manager very early in my career who told me: 'as you're developing in your career take the best from your managers. Recognise the traits you don't want to be known for and leave those behind'. I have taken that sentiment into my career with me and think of it often. She was a fabulous role model.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Really, anyone who is out there challenging the norm but if I had to pick a person, Deidre Michie, Chief Executive of OEUK.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Honesty, two-way trust, and motivation.

Most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

Elon Musk purchasing Twitter and hearing all the different viewpoints.

Do you have a favourite film?

I'm a huge Star Wars fan and was way back when Episode 4, 5, 6 was 1, 2, 3!



Georgina Warren

Company **IHG Hotels & Resorts** / Job Title **Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director**



Following my degree in Spanish and Politics, during which I was able to study and work abroad in South America and Spain; I embarked on a career in Resource Management at EY.

Diversity and inclusion were seen as critical to the people agenda, to drive

forward business performance and ensure teams were reflective of our clients. I was selected to lead a critical DE&I resourcing project, where we made huge changes, ensuring that project resource selection became a more equitable process that enabled better diverse experiences for consultants.

I then moved on to London Stock Exchange Group where I led on the Wellbeing and DE&I agenda through the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, which made me understand the value of creating a culture that can truly support individuals to not just thrive but to feel supported in unprecedented times. I joined the hospitality industry at IHG Hotels & Resorts last summer, which was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

It is great to see the impact we are having at IHG Hotels & Resorts. We are fostering a strong culture and making sure that our teams represent our local markets and guests. We have made so much progress this year to raise awareness, and I'm excited about the journey ahead.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't worry too much about the future; it will all fall into place. Make the most of every opportunity you have. There are no mistakes: every opportunity is an opportunity to learn, and it all helps you to get to where you are today.

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

To me, D&I means that everyone can be their authentic self in their workplace, and are given

enough space, flexibility, understanding by others to show up in the way that means they can perform their best.

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

I've only recently joined the sector, and have watched it recover following the pandemic, stronger than ever before. This time, inclusion is consciously right at the heart of it. We seek to create an inclusive experience for guests and employees.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Transparency. Clarity. Empowering. And the ability to provide good feedback, from which people can learn.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

I have re-read Mary Portas' *Work like a Woman* after seeing her at the WiHTL Inclusion Summit. It is so inspiring to me, as I look to my female role models who have careers and families, I always wonder how they make it work;

as I am keen to do the same in the future.

What quote inspires you the most?

"No one can discover you until you discover you. Exploit your talents, skills and strengths and make the world sit up and take notice."

What is your favorite book or film?

I have always loved *X Men*. I think it's amazing that a group who were deemed outcasts in society managed to come together and leverage their superpowers to save the world again and again.

Hannah Wells

Company **PureGym** / Job Title **Head of Commercial Partnerships**



I started my career as a management consultant at Deloitte which provided me with an outstanding grounding in business. As a recent university graduate, I was not ready to commit to a single industry or role and joining consulting provided me with exposure to a

variety of industries, personalities, and skill sets. I learnt what was important to me in business, and when the time was right to leave consulting and go into industry, I knew I wanted to work somewhere that had a clear purpose and a strong company culture. That is what led me to my current role leading the commercial partnerships function at PureGym in which I look to drive sustainable and strategic growth of the business through B2B channels. The role provides a fantastic opportunity to combine my commercial and analytical skill set with the broader skills of stakeholder management, marketing, and proposition development.



What do you find most rewarding about working in HTL?

The relationship with the customer. Our industry is built around key interaction points with the customer which puts them at the heart of our decision making. I love reading our member stories which bring to life the wide-ranging impact of the gym on people's lives. The stories are always unique but there are the same underlying themes of mental health, social wellbeing, and health journeys.

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

I hope we will see greater recognition of the role of the leisure industry in supporting healthy lives. The link between health and physical exercise was brought into sharp focus during the Covid crisis and I believe there has been a repositioning of the leisure industry from being considered a hobby to an essential service. I hope this journey will continue and we see a greater diversity of people using the gyms and prioritising health.

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

It is critical for women to see diversity at the top of an organisation to give them the confidence to progress. At PureGym we are fortunate to have many women leaders who are leading the way, including the MD of the UK business Rebecca Passmore. As a business our motto is 'everybody welcome' and we recognise the importance of reflecting that diversity within our teams.

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

The beauty of the HTL industry is that there is a wide variety of roles from gym managers and trainers to accountants and architects. There is a role for everybody so if you are interested – go for it! I would also share Sheryl Sandberg's advice for women which is to sit at the table. Seek challenges, take risks, and pursue your goals with gusto.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Karren Brady.

What is the most interesting thing you've read, seen, or heard recently?

I love all of Malcolm Gladwell's work however his recent episode

of Revisionist History discusses the role of businesses in tackling climate change, a topic which will no doubt dominate the next decade.

What is your favourite book?

Solve for Happy by Mo Gawdat.



Katherine White

Company **Wyboston Lakes** / Job Title **Director of People**



I started my first waitressing job when I was twelve at a local catering company and got the bug for hospitality. I completed a National & Higher BTEC in Hospitality Management before doing a BA in Hotel Business Management and went into industry at 23 as an

Assistant Manager in a hotel in London. Once I started, I absolutely loved it! At 27, I moved to Four Pillars Hotels as the Group HR Manager.

I have been in my job as Director of People with Wyboston since 2018, working for Steve Jones who I have known for seventeen years.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't be afraid of the boxes people might put you in. I received a call to handle a customer complaint when I was a duty manager at the age of 23 and went down to reception. The customer looked me up and down, and said "No, we asked to see a proper manager". That experience stuck with me. I don't think people should be treated differently because of age, gender or race.

Also, stick to being you and what you want. Over my

career, I have heard people say, "it should be done like this". But I like to trust my gut instinct as well.

What does diversity and inclusion mean to you, and mean in Wyboston Lakes?

To me it's all about ensuring everyone is treated equally and feels included and safe to be themselves. As a business, whilst we know there is still much to do, we are keen to drive this through from the top. We are very proud that not only is our Chair a woman, but over half of our SMT



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Valerie Gurney. She was my first Personnel Manager and inspired me to want to work in People Management.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"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 Angelou.

What is your favourite book?

Love Your Imposter: Be Your Best Self, Flaws and All, by Rita Clifton.



are women too, and with team members ranging in age from 16 to 78, so we do consider ourselves fairly inclusive in some areas already. Our plan moving forwards includes rewriting policies to be more inclusive, providing training for everyone and really creating that culture where everyone feels they truly belong.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

I love the fact that I am looking after people from both a team and a customer perspectives. Every day is different, and every customer and team member has different needs. Ensuring our team give the best of themselves at all times is key to creating our customer experience.

How do you think HTL has changed since you've been in the sector?

How do you think it will change in the future?

Reading the statistics that were published in the WiHTL annual report, we can see we have made significant progress. However, there is more work to do. We should be giving equal opportunities and breaking through glass ceilings. We should be aiming for more than just edging the quota on gender. But I am positive – the hospitality industry is working collaboratively to shape the future. Covid may have brought about a lot of difficult times, but I believe it also showed how important hospitality is to the UK and that collaboration is key.

Debbie Whittingham

Company **J D Wetherspoon Plc** / Job Title **Regional Manager and Employee Director**



I joined Wetherspoons as an Assistant Manager in 1992. At that time, the company only had 38 sites, but it was growing quickly and by 1993 I was running my own pub. Eight years later, having successfully led two top-performing London pubs, I was promoted to

run an area in North London. In the early days the work was hard and the hours were long, but as the company has developed through experience and innovation, Wetherspoons' vision to create a realistic work/life balance ensuring the wellbeing of the managers and their teams has really blossomed.

Now, I am a Regional Manager and an Employee Director and get the opportunity to provide strategic input in many areas of our business, particularly to represent all of my colleagues and associates on the main board.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your industry role model?

Su Cacioppo, Personnel Director at J D Wetherspoon.

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Integrity and honesty.

What you have been reading recently?

Humanology by Luke O'Neill.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I wish that I had felt more confident earlier in my career. I really would tell myself to not wait to get noticed, but to step forward with confidence knowing the positive impact that I could bring.

“ I really would tell myself to not wait to get noticed, but to step forward with confidence knowing the positive impact that I could bring.

What does diversity and inclusion mean in your organisation?

To me, it means that anyone can join Wetherspoons and have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations; there's always a level playing field that recognises and appreciates the skills and talents that every single person brings. There are no barriers to joining and we actively encourage promotion through the company. We hire for attitude and train for skill.

This is reflected in the fact that we have people from every walk of life, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation and disability, working and achieving in our company. And we have network groups specifically

designed to promote the interests of all, to ensure their voice is listened to, heard, shared and valued.

What motivates you most about working within the HTL sector?

Ultimately, our company is all about the people. I love to see the daily interactions between our teams and our customers, many of which could be described as little acts of kindness. There's a real generosity of spirit that I see in our pubs every day.

I love being in our pubs on a busy night, taking in an atmosphere that's full of laughter and chatter.

I'm also very proud of the part I've played in my teams' development and have always appreciated the opportunity to see their careers blossom.

What do you think about the future of the HTL sector?

Within our industry the only real constant is change, but right now, disruption and turmoil following the pandemic are a challenge for every company within the sector; a sector which is still the fourth biggest contributor to the economy. We remain very positive and realistic about our prospects because we know that we matter; pubs matter; our teams matter and continue to make the difference. Pubs have continued to be at the heart of diverse communities up and down the country and I think we are brilliantly positioned to provide a hugely valuable service to all of these communities.



Katherine Wilkinson

Company **Welcome Break** / Job Title **Head of Talent**



I My experience began with a Hospitality and Leisure Management degree and whilst studying, I had part time jobs working in restaurants and bars. After my degree I completed a year's placement at Disney World in Florida, which was one of the best experiences

of my life. I knew from there hospitality was where I wanted to stay and progress my career.

My career in HR and Training started after getting my first HR job as a Training Officer working for Hilton Heathrow Airport Hotel. I really enjoyed using my operational skills while gaining valuable HR and Training experience. From Training Officer to Training Manager to Cluster Training Manager for Hilton Hotels, I eventually moved to Regional Learning and Development Manager for Welcome Break where I have now been for eleven years. Having had a variety of roles within the People Team, predominantly all learning and development, I am now Head of Talent.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Trust and the ability to create a safe environment where you can grow and make mistakes.

What quote do you find inspiring?

"Fight every argument

like you're right but listen to every argument like you're wrong."

What is the latest book you have read?

Tina Turner: My Love Story, Tina Turner's autobiography.



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

Teaching and training are two areas that are very close to me as I have a lot of friends and family working in these fields, so teaching something, somewhere, could have been a possibility. Another teenage dream was to run my own restaurant – I really love providing people with a service.

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

I am a huge advocate for helping women get back into the workplace after having children. The saying "women are expected to work like they don't have children and raise children like they don't work" massively resonates with me. I feel like it is crucial for women in the workplace to be able to speak out to those in a similar position and be able to share any frustrations and struggles they may be having. Having people believe you can still do your job just as well as the person sat next to you is so important when

some days, or nights, have been tough and you feel like you're hanging on by a thread.

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

Never compromise on what you want, chase your dreams, and allow yourself to believe that you can do it. There are people that have less ability than you that are getting more out of life because they put one step forward and went for it. You can achieve more than you think.

What has been your experience of role models and role modelling in the sector?

When I worked for Hilton at Heathrow Airport, I worked for a Hotel Manager whose career took her all over the world. I always admired how well she carried herself, how her confidence shone through and how well respected she was. Dagmar walked into a room and people sat up and listened to what she had to say. I admired that, I wanted that.



Charlotte Wright

Company **Elior UK** / Job Title **Director of CSR & Wellness**



I took a slightly different path to most of my friends. I had my daughter at 18, left college and went into full-time employment. Inspired by my auntie's successful career in HR, I decided that I wanted to qualify through the CIPD so I took night classes to work my way into that world.

Applying to be HR Coordinator here at Elior was the best decision I have made. Within my first year in the role, I had completely fallen in love with the industry and developed a huge passion for it. I progressed within HR, moving on to being an HR Business Partner and then a Talent Manager. I sidestepped into CSR when Elior gave me the opportunity to take on a CSR Manager role. I completed further qualifications in environmental management, and I later became Head of CSR, before recently becoming Director of CSR and Wellness. It is a very exciting time to be working on this topic and in this sector.



What advice would you give to the next generation of women looking to enter the sector?

Seek out a coach or a mentor. One of the most pivotal things for me in my development has been having a coach. If there is somebody that inspires you in the industry, try to make a connection – it is so valuable. Bringing your whole self to work is so important too. In the hospitality sector, there is freedom to express yourself. Becoming confident in yourself puts you in the best possible place to springboard into your dreams and aspirations.

Who are the role models in your career?

There are a few. Our Chief Exec, Catherine Roe is one. She is super smart and savvy, with a great sense of humour too. My current line manager, Michal Seal, who is a visionary and a talented coach. A colleague and very good friend of mine, Emma Langford, is someone who I see as a role model. She sees the best in everyone and has this incredible ability to handle absolutely any situation with a smile.



What does diversity look like at Elior?

I'm really proud of where we are on diversity because our senior leadership team is just over 50% female, we have a female CEO, and our Board of directors is very diverse too, with over 60% female members. We are hoping to drive gender diversity further in Chef roles as we aspire to encourage more women to engage in this area.

What do you think holds people back from applying for roles in HTL?

Across our diversity surveys that we have conducted, a recurring theme we've detected is that a lack of confidence holds people back. Sometimes people think that the roles are intimidating and what is really needed to encourage them to apply is confidence in their own ability, so this is something we are specifically aiming to address at Elior.

QUICKFIRE

What qualities do you value in a leader?

Openness, forward thinking and decisiveness.

What is the most interesting thing you have read, seen or heard recently?

I recently read about a man who fell overboard and lost his boat at sea.

Despite being sure he would drown, he managed to swim for 14 hours through the night, using the moon to direct him back to shore. I think of this when I feel like I'm having a bad day!

What quote do you find inspiring?

Becoming by Michelle Obama.





Role Models for Inclusion

Leaders moving the dial on diversity and inclusion

For the third year, 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.





Katie Birchall

Whitbread
Human Resources Business Partner

I have worked in the hospitality industry ever since I turned sixteen and got a part-time job in a private hospital, in catering. At university, I studied HR and did a placement year in an F&B business, and became very familiar with the pub and F&B world. By this point, I knew when I finished my degree I wanted to go into hospitality.

I came across Whitbread when I looked up the number one hospitality business in the UK. I applied for their HR graduate scheme and have never looked back. I learnt so much on the scheme – especially that I enjoyed employee relations and applying the law to real cases, because of my passion for fairness and equality. I led a team of Employee Relations Advisors for two years, and then was successful in getting a maternity cover placement as an HR Business Partner within Whitbread's Support Centre. A year ago, that role was made permanent, which is where I am today.

Why is D&I important to you?

As an LGBTQ+ woman, D&I is really important to me as throughout my life I've had experiences of noticing some differences in the way I have, or my community has, been treated or how comfortable I've sometimes felt about coming out as bisexual. Since I started at Whitbread, I have always felt safe being myself. And that is what has made me want to make sure everyone else feels this way at work.

Why do you think it's important to bring all colleagues along on the D&I journey?

We won't be able to achieve our goals for D&I if we do not bring our allies with us. They are part of creating a more inclusive world.

As an HR Business Partner, I work to make sure that D&I is at the heart of all our processes. This involves thinking about how we listen to marginalised groups and the perspectives of our allies. It's also about talent and development, and taking bold steps to become a more inclusive workplace.

What does being a role model and ally for D&I mean to you?

It is important to me that as part of my work I am vocal about how we can make improvements on inclusivity and share our stories, so that people can have a more positive experience and know that they are not alone.

It's not an expectation that everyone in a marginalised group should have to do that, but I feel comfortable doing so. It is important

to me to raise the issues that our community is facing. Statistically, female LGBTQ+ colleagues are less likely to speak up, so it feels critical to me that I do. I'm also a member of our Gender Equality Network and work to ensure that we are inclusive for all genders and we have a clear strategy on topics such as menopause, flexibility and parenthood.

As co-leader of the GLOW inclusion network, can you please describe the work you're doing to drive up LGBTQ+ inclusion at Whitbread?

In the last three years, we've reviewed what the GLOW network should be. We have partnered with Stonewall to become a diversity champion and were recognised by Stonewall in their Gold Awards for own work on LGBTQ+ inclusion. Our partnership with Stonewall helped give us a thorough framework for our policies and processes.

One of the first things, in line with the framework, was to pen Whitbread's Trans and Non-Binary Equality Policy. Alongside that, I wrote an action plan to help Line Managers and employees support transitions in the workplace. Since joining the Gender Equality Network I've written guidance to support our team members going through the menopause

“ It's very important to me to be vocal on D&I.

and I'm currently on our family friendly workstream. Through my Business Partner role, I have looked at how we can reach out to more diverse talent pools, be more inclusive in our internal process and how we can embed diversity and inclusion into our learning and development programmes.

What role do you think the hospitality sector has to play in creating a more equal society?

Because the hospitality sector is so people-oriented, we have a huge role to play. Creating an environment in those spaces where everyone feels included is reflective of what we should want our society to be like, in terms of everyone feeling equal. If we can create that within our spaces, hopefully we can help people understand how they might create that in different industries as well.



Donna Borthwick

Wyndham Destinations Asia Pacific
Vice President Legal and Compliance Asia Pacific

I completed my law degree and was admitted as a barrister and solicitor in New Zealand but have spent most of my working career in Australia. In my first role out of law school, all the partners were women, which was unusual at that time. Subsequently, I have worked with majority male partners and senior leaders and the different experiences have helped me realise the importance of gender diversity. I have practised various areas of law over the years, from legal aid (supporting women's refuge and child advocacy) to working on significant commercial transactions for a major European firm. For the past 20 years, I have worked in-house, specialising in the financial services sectors, the last nine years with Wyndham Destinations, a division of Travel+Leisure Co (NYSE:TNL).

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

We all have different life experiences, perspectives and our own unique stories. Often our differences are not visible. I believe it is essential to recognise and embrace all our differences and remove barriers which prevent under-represented groups from fully participating. For me, that means doing all I can to be an ally and to provide whatever support I can to ensure every person I interact with has a sense of belonging and equality. Everyone has a voice and we are all equally entitled to feel that our voice, opinions and perspectives are valued and heard.

What have you done to promote diversity and inclusion within Wyndham Destinations?

As the lead of TNL's international chapter of Women in Travel diversity

resource group (DRG), we represent women associates and allies across Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia Pacific. The current board consists of associates from each of these regions and recognises that cultural and geographic challenges need to be taken into consideration both in the workplace and wider community. Membership of our DRG has quadrupled over the last year, as we have focused on building awareness and allyship within the business. We have achieved this by providing a number of valuable presentations and resources on a variety of topics including women's health and mentoring.

In addition, we took the initiative to extend an invitation for some of these events to our 70,000 timeshare member families in Asia Pacific.

Part of D&I is giving back to the community. I am

passionate about the charity work that TNL undertakes across all our business divisions and I am honoured to be a board member of Wishes by Wyndham, a registered charity in Australia. Since commencement it has raised more than \$500,000 toward community charities.

Why do you think it's important to bring all colleagues along the D&I journey?

To be truly inclusive, everybody has to be aligned. Working collaboratively has been shown to drive higher employee engagement, retention and innovation. This can only be accomplished if your colleagues are on the same journey, and we promote and foster trust in all associates and a sense of belonging and common purpose.

How has diversity and inclusion impacted the way TNL operates?

Our diversity resource groups are driven by our associates and provide opportunities to grow their careers through leadership and business engagement. It has opened up networks for many of us across the globe, providing professional development opportunities and a culture of inclusion.

The Women in Travel international chapter launched last year, and we are now in the process of establishing an international PRIDE DRG to represent the same regions. Following from there, we intend to also establish a DRG for our indigenous associates.

What advice would you give to those working to promote D&I in their businesses?

Don't assume you know what issues are being faced by those who are underrepresented within the business – be aware of unconscious bias. Clearly communicate the importance of D&I and provide an environment within which your employees feel safe and are comfortable to speak out. At all times demonstrate visible leadership efforts – such as supporting associate diversity resource groups, establishing designated D&I resources and setting goals in areas which make a difference.





Karen Boshier

Greene King, Managing Director – Premium, Urban Pubs and Venture Brands

I first joined hospitality at Greene King nearly ten years ago, after 24 years in retail. I started my career in M&S as an A Level trainee, going on to work in field and head office roles in several organisations including The Burton Group, Kingfisher, Mothercare and latterly JJB Sports, where I was Retail and Football Director. Working within the sports arena really shaped my commercial senses, and alerted me to the discrimination issues in sport, which was a very male-dominated sector at the time.

The transition into the pub sector was a great move – as I could make a big difference in pubs with my background, and it has indeed presented me with a richly rewarding career. I now run a part of Greene King called Premium, Urban and Venture Brands as Managing Director for around 300 Urban Pubs nationwide. The Venture Brands business consists of Metropolitan Pub Company, Hickory's Smokehouse and Hotels Venture, all of which I chair. I also run a new Premium Innovation Brand called Crafted Pubs.

I am a very active sponsor for the LGBTQI community at Greene King. My passion was originally sparked by running a few London venues and then becoming a sponsor for our employee group The Village Greene. I am now a spokesperson and keynote speaker for the hospitality industry, and it is the most rewarding mission I have ever undertaken. I am The Guardian Pride Powerlist Ally 2021/2022, British Diversity Champion Finalist 2021, Diva Champion Finalist 2021 and European Diversity Champion of the Year 2022.

What does being a role model for inclusion mean to you?

Being a champion of any underrepresented group is a huge privilege. I believe that we have made a big difference at Greene King, for those in our team who now feel that they are included in our mission to achieve everyday inclusion. On a broader level, the industry is waking up to the many benefits of social inclusion – but representation at the

most senior levels remains poor. I hope by elevating this mission we can create change faster.

What advice would you give to a business wanting to drive up their focus on D&I?

Companies often look outside of their organisation for answers, but I think the answers often lie within your own team. Make plans and set targets to create more diverse teams. Look for reasons to hire, promote

and develop those who can bring diverse perspectives to problem solving. The activity of the ELiGs at Greene King and the positive actions initiated by Nick and the Board really inspire the team to be brave and act in the spirit of Everyday Inclusion. If you are working in a team, ask yourself why diverse thinking might be valuable in building your ideas and attracting more customers?

What work have you done personally to promote diversity and inclusion within Greene King?

My work has revolved around The Village Greene and empowering these brilliant people to feel free to be themselves and feel at home in our business. We make sure that the events and considerations of their lives are included in our thinking and do not

go unnoticed. We provide healthy challenge where it's needed, and help build policies that will attract more people from diverse backgrounds to work and socialise with us. We want to ensure that our pubs are a safe social space for people of all backgrounds and orientation. We have promoted women's sport in pubs, sponsored regional Pride events, raised the Pride flag over the brewery – the list is very long!

What does great leadership look like to you?

Great leaders never lose touch or empathy with the sharp end of their business. The role of the leader is to see the challenges, keep perspective, grow capability, support change and believe in their team. Then ANYTHING is possible!





Louise Broome

ODEON Cinemas Group, Senior Manager - DE&I/
Wellbeing and Group People Partner

I studied film studies at college, so securing my role at ODEON was a real milestone in my career. Previously, my experience had been predominantly in the retail sector, working as a general HR practitioner. I love the fast pace this sector provides!

Having worked at ODEON now for four years, I have moved from generalist roles to a more specialist one, focusing on diversity, equity, engagement, and well-being. ODEON has incredibly strong internal values, with passionate people who really believe in these values. We want to ensure our amazing culture is reflected externally, so people know they can feel welcome when they join us and grow their career too.

Why is D&I important to you?

When I joined, the first thing I noticed was colleagues' passion about DE&I. It was infectious! I want to do right by our people and really believe our leaders want to do the right thing too.

I wholeheartedly believe that variance in thinking makes a business stronger and more innovative. Our sector employs so many people from different social and economic backgrounds, so we have an opportunity to really trailblaze and set a high bar for others to follow. At ODEON, I am lucky to have the support of a senior leadership team who passionately place diversity, equity and inclusion at the top of our agenda. We are all committed to being at the forefront of DE&I progression.

What are the D&I projects taking place at ODEON?

We have recently established four employee forums within ODEON which support each of the different facets of DE&I. We initially partnered with WiHTL to help us design a framework and provide a base level of knowledge so our colleagues would be set up for success. To date, we have had three forums present to our SLT, receiving some fantastic feedback with some really tangible outputs.

One example is our recent Black History Month campaign which saw ODEON playing a wide range of films celebrating Black filmmakers, talent and stories. This enabled colleagues and guests to gain a broader understanding of Black histories with our forum wanted to showcase films that went beyond racism and slavery, and spotlighted Black achievement. Cinema teams and support office

colleagues were also invited to get involved, helping us to drive conversations for this campaign with film recommendations, pictures, and video content.

What does great leadership look like to you?

I have worked with some incredible people leaders over the last 20 years, and for me, authenticity is key to their success. The most memorable leaders are those who say it as it is, inspire you by their passion and energy, and really fire you up when things are challenging. A good leader should be commercially astute to ensure business success but also show strong empathy and appreciate the value individuality brings. Everyone has a strength and it's about finding it and empowering it. A good leader gives people confidence and lets them fly.

What does being a role model for inclusion mean to you?

I think a role model should demonstrate persistence, with a strong inner voice as you need to be relentless at times, and a real conviction that you are doing what you believe is right. It's about understanding that cultural change isn't created overnight, and small interventions can create a ripple.

You can and will face cynicism. But I see this as an opportunity to educate, which keeps me motivated. The culture continues to grow at ODEON and I have witnessed just how much new space has been created for colleagues to feel confident, and challenged. I am immensely proud of this and it helps that I am supported by an incredible People Team and group of DE&I Forum members who are equally passionate, so I know we will make great strides together.

What role do you think the HTL sector has to play in creating a more equal society?

HTL is one of the biggest employers in the UK and Ireland, and we have a huge opportunity to set the bar for progress. In HTL, we provide significant opportunities to people that are at the start of their careers so there is huge potential to influence and educate future leaders on what good looks like. We can instill strong D&I values so that they in turn will be able to influence the people around them throughout their career. It's continuous learning and growth that can make all the difference.





Alice Christerson

Deliveroo
Senior Corporate Counsel

I've worked in the Deliveroo legal team for three years, focusing on corporate law. Before Deliveroo I was in private practice advising a variety of different clients. I prefer operating within a business where it's possible to develop a real understanding of its priorities and strategies, ultimately making me more invested in the work I do.

HTL is a great industry to work in because you receive constant feedback from your consumer base as they interact with your brand or use your services and you can really see the impact of your work. I enjoy the instant recognition of Deliveroo when I meet new people – they will inevitably have an opinion and it's an immediate conversation starter.

Can you talk about the mentorship programme you have?

I have been involved in two Deliveroo sponsored mentorship schemes. Roo've Been Served is a scheme launched in partnership with Aston University through which five law students have been paired with members of our legal team. The scheme has involved regular mentorship sessions, assignments, training, work experience and networking opportunities. The second is a partnership with a charity called BelEve through which 17 young women aged between 16 and 22 were paired with mentors from Deliveroo. In addition to mentorship sessions, the mentees have participated in skills development workshops, a tech insights session and a careers evening.

What does great leadership look like to you?

Having a vision and identifying a purpose is key. The people you lead need to know that their work will have a positive impact and how this will be achieved. I would also never underestimate the importance of respect, trust, and kindness. You cannot lead people unless they know that they are valued and you are genuinely invested in them.

How do you ensure D&I remains a priority in your organisation?

We cannot force anyone to prioritise D&I but I think there is a natural progression towards recognising the value of a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce. When we were recruiting mentors for our programme with BelEve, we were

oversubscribed with volunteers because I think people jump at the opportunity to get involved and make a difference. I've been very encouraged by how invested people at Deliveroo are in D&I work.

What does it mean to you to be a role model and ally?

I feel a responsibility to give back and to speak out if diversity, equity and inclusion are not valued. I grew up in South Africa which is a vibrant and diverse place with extremely high rates of inequality. If you've been fortunate enough to have access to opportunities that others have not, it is almost assumed that

you will do whatever you can personally to adjust those imbalances with an inclusive and equitable society being the ultimate aim.

What role do you think the hospitality sector has to play in creating a more equal society?

I think all sectors have a responsibility to support the communities they serve and create pathways to opportunities for people who otherwise would struggle to get there on their own. Ultimately it's a mutually beneficial arrangement as companies are then able to access diverse talent and create balanced teams.





Beth Clarke

wagamama
Head of People Development

I didn't take a typical route into my career. I parted company with school and college early as we didn't see eye to eye. After various jobs, I joined Nestlé, where I stayed for 20 years. My first role was Secretary to the HR Director and after a while, I was given the opportunity to move into personnel admin, then started supporting in recruitment. Around five years later I moved into a generalist role, constantly learning and progressing. I went from a generalist into learning and development, where I found my true passion.

I left Nestlé and joined Zipcar, as Head of Learning and Development. A year later I was asked to be International Head of Talent and Performance for Avis Budget Group where I stayed for about seven years and added D&I to my role. In 2021, the opportunity came for me to join wagamama as Head of People Development which was exciting as I had always been a big fan of the brand.

Can you describe the work you do on waga women and how it has impacted the business so far?

We launched our waga women initiative with a live webinar with Alex Scott MBE. Our first action was to set up a team network group with three priorities: 1) focus on women's representation, particularly in back of house; 2) create a safe sanctuary for women to talk about issues that may impact them; and 3) prioritise development and supporting relevant options.

What does being a role model for inclusion mean to you?

It has always been around the premise that people like me can succeed, whatever 'like me' might mean. No matter your story,

your background, your gender. It is the attitudes and behaviour that make the difference.

What work are you doing outside of your organisation on D&I? Are there learnings that can be applied to wagamama?

One of my children chose the wrong path and was in lots of trouble with the authorities, so I decided I would become a Responsible Adult within a Police Station. I didn't want to ever feel that a young person would be in a custody suite by themselves. I also started doing some peer mentoring work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in my local community.

This has leant itself to some of the work we now

do at wagamama. We're stepping up our work within the apprenticeship space as well as working in the prison space, giving people the opportunity to return to work when they leave prison. We're also looking at the opportunities we can provide young people with learning difficulties to work in our kitchens. I'm incredibly passionate about diversity in its widest sense.

How do you ensure that the business, from Board to front-line employees, remains engaged in the topic of D&I?

It is tough in hospitality because of the multi-site element but I am lucky to have a passionate team, who as trainers, are the "feet on the street" and help push the D&I agenda in the work they do. Also, setting up the right network groups, with the right framework will really help.

We are also recruiting more Gen Zs than ever before, and diversity and inclusion is an absolute given with

them. They expect the businesses they interact with to take it seriously. That includes sustainability, mental health, and wellbeing. So, we must work hard to ensure they know we're prioritising these areas.

What does D&I mean to you?

It is a given. I think listening to other people's stories is so important. It provides insight for people who might not comprehend how important D&I is. The world is diverse. If you go through life without removing those blindfolds of judgement, you end up creating more issues, rather than solving them. We should be celebrating, educating, and respecting people no matter their background.

One of the things Alex Scott said when I interviewed her is that 'pressure is privilege'. And I agree, doing this work is a privilege no matter what the pressure.





Francesca Coupe

British Airways
Director of HR

The travel sector is exciting – planes flying all over the world, an operation that runs 24/7 365 days a year and the special interactions we have with thousands of customers every single day. Our colleagues at British Airways are key to that. Our performance is the sum of our people and our people are truly amazing.

My role encompasses Business Partnering, D,E&I, Strategic Resourcing, Talent, OD and Policy. The combination of these areas gives me such a unique overview of the entire organisation, and I am incredibly lucky to work alongside a team of brilliant people.

Can you talk about the initiatives you're driving to achieve 40% senior female leadership?

I've always believed what gets measured gets done, having data at our fingertips is what's needed to challenge decision making and demonstrate the commercial value of HR. Targets drive leadership accountability and an understanding of the collective responsibility we have as leaders.

We are working on a range of initiatives. We've recently launched gender diversity dashboards, reverse mentoring, re-shaped our recruitment guidelines to ensure diverse selection panels and shortlists, and commenced a review of our policies to ensure we are supporting our people in an inclusive way. We're launching a new talent strategy which is objective, inclusive and measures our behaviours rather than just delivery.

Our new family leave policy was a big step ensuring

gender neutrality and offering our colleagues the support they need. Since the launch, we've seen a massive reduction in the percentage of colleagues who leave the business within six months of returning from primary parent leave. We hope these improvements and initiatives will remove some of the barriers for progression and retention.

You have done an amazing job with the new family leave policy, are there other applications of inclusivity in the HTL sector that inspire you?

One company that really stands out for me is the Oberoi Group. The global reach of the organisation means that D,E&I is key to their success. Their inclusive talent management approach is a great example of driving inclusivity in the workplace, providing careers for their people rather than just jobs.

Going into 2023, we will be putting together a comprehensive D,E&I

strategy that looks at improving inclusivity and representation across gender, race and ethnicity, socio-economic mobility, disability and sexuality.

Why do you think it's important to bring all colleagues along on the D&I journey?

One of our core values is being open-minded. We embrace new perspectives and are inclusive, forward thinking, and diverse. Our values unite us. Having 'open-minded' as one of our core values is key to us achieving our D,E&I agenda. Everyone has a role to play in being ambassadors for change. Our colleagues are central to our D,E&I agenda and in making British Airways a more inclusive place to work, where we can show up as their true selves.

How has D&I impacted the way your business operates?

At the heart of D,E&I is an appreciation of our differences. Organisations that embrace and value these differences are more effective because their people are more likely to feel themselves, show up in their own authentic way and that's where great ideas are generated through diversity of thought.

This year, we launched a reverse mentoring programme, with our most senior leaders being

mentored by a colleague from a different ethnic background. This has resulted in a deeper understanding each other's lived experiences, ensuring we have safe spaces to bounce ideas off each other, and ultimately gain important insights into barriers our colleagues have faced. This equips our leaders with the understanding of the pivotal role they play in making BA more inclusive.

What does great leadership look like to you?

Honesty, integrity and empathy sum it up for me. It's about taking your teams on a journey, providing a clear vision and supporting them in order to collectively reach your goals. Everyone has a role to play, but a true leader always has their eye on the destination. When that vision is clear and people believe in it, the momentum is contagious. That's where the magic happens.

The leaders I have been inspired by always strive to be the best versions of themselves. They know what excellence looks like. They have embraced challenge, recognised their imperfections and empowered their teams to deliver. A great leader is someone who sees their role as enabling their teams to be the very best versions of themselves.





Anne Dewison

Aramark
L&D Director

I initially wanted to be a teacher but during university I started working as a waitress and I loved the environment, so I decided to change my degree. After graduating I went to work for Compass and was an Area Manager. After my maternity leave I joined Aramark.

Whilst at Aramark I decided to move from Operations to Learning and I realised that I could do more to help women in the business, encourage people in progressing their career. Seeing people grow from kitchen porters or food service assistants to managers, and having input in that, is the most satisfying thing about my job.



What does being a good role model mean to you?

Being a role model is important to me because I love to see people progressing from anywhere, particularly when you come across people who have done so much and have got a lot to offer and are incredibly committed, it's just lovely to see them blossom.

I remember a Polish lady who joined Aramark. Her English wasn't particularly good in the beginning, but we arranged for her to take language courses. She was already a very good manager, and through these courses she built up

confidence, and overcame her obstacle, which was communication. This person is one of many over the years.

How do you ensure that everyone in the business, from the Board to front-line employees, remains engaged in D&I?

We've started building awareness through D&I training, which everyone goes through when they join the company. We have two Employee Resource Groups, one called 'Empower', a network for all women and allies, another called 'Pride' for members of the LGBTQ community and allies.

What steps have you taken so far to ensure diversity and inclusion in your team?

Along with our Employee Resource Groups, we also have a female chef network and we have launched policies to support those going through the menopause and those transitioning. We take people on consciously, considering D&I when hiring. We have many more female chefs as well now. But all this progress aside, I think it's also very important to be open to learning, being real advocates for and understanding different people, and accepting that there's always more to learn.

How has D&I impacted the way Aramark operates?

Our people are our greatest asset. When they feel supported and inspired, they turn creativity into innovation to serve our customers and deliver exceptional

experiences. At Aramark we are constantly building strategic focus to advance DEI among our workforce and surrounding communities.

The expansion of our range of employee resource groups will help us embed the D&I message in the whole of the organisation and encouraging collaboration between the groups will benefit all involved.

Having updated policies and employee resource groups has started the conversations and allowed for more openness.

What do you think are the biggest obstacles to progress D&I in HTL?

In terms of D&I progress in HTL I think the main obstacle is getting information about what the industry has to offer to a wider audience to attract the most diverse range of people. I think this will help drive diversity because people will see the full range of opportunities the industry has to offer.





Stephanie Gayet

McDonald's
Head of Franchising

My first experience working in the HTL sector was a placement in communications at a luxury brand of hotels, casinos and restaurants in France whilst completing my Master's degree. After my studies, I worked for Bouygues Construction and Xerox as a Finance professional, before taking on a role with McDonald's UK. Fifteen years later, I am still here and loving it!

During the first twelve years at McDonald's, I worked in lots of different roles in the finance team, gaining an understanding of all parts of the business. Then, in 2020, I got the exciting opportunity to move internally to head up the franchising team where I look after the relationship with our 200 franchisees in the UK and Ireland.



Why is diversity and inclusion important and what does it mean to you?

Diversity means lots of different things to me – it can relate to gender and ethnicity as well as age, background and culture. Inclusion is about being able to be yourself. I genuinely believe that diversity and true inclusion in a business result in varied views and perspectives being brought to the table and therefore enriched decisions.

In my current role, I have the privilege of recruiting new franchisees, giving a

broad range of people the opportunity to operate their own business, which is really rewarding and important to me.

Do you think that conversations around diversity and inclusion are happening more frequently?

Yes they are. So many companies now have this on their agenda, as they recognise DEI provide real strength to their business. This year alone, for example, discussions have started in the workplace around menopause,

which is something that people never spoke about before. Even if it does not directly affect you, everyone has female colleagues and relatives at home going through it, so raising awareness and knowledge in this area is really important. Everybody should have conversations around diversity and inclusion and be on the journey together.

Which forums are you currently working with at McDonald's?

I'm on the board of McDonald's UK&I Women's Leadership Network. My female franchisees have also set up their own forum to support one another. Linking the two forums enables us to organise events together and share ideas and resources.

Additionally, we work closely with the BFA to promote franchising as an opportunity for diverse individuals; and my female franchisees help us encourage more women to become business owners.

Why do you think it is important to have women role models?

It is crucial to have role models to look up to, male or female, as much as it is to lift others as you climb. I have held nine different roles in my fifteen years at McDonald's and I can thank a number of managers and stakeholders who have

“Everybody should have conversations around diversity and inclusion and be on the journey together.”

been advocates for me along the way.

Women should share their experiences to inspire the next generation to be brave, have confidence and believe in themselves to succeed. Personal drive and ambition then defines what you make of your experience, and the opportunities are endless if you are up for seizing them.

What advice would you give to businesses hoping to drive diversity and inclusion?

Firstly, identify gaps and bottlenecks to understand whether the business isn't attracting diverse candidates or whether the diversity is lost through the hierarchy. Once you establish that, you can then focus on what to do to improve it. This could be anything from considering whether roles have sufficient flexibility, to implementing specific pathways, leadership or development programmes to support diverse employees.



Mark Gregory-White

Millennium & Copthorne at Chelsea FC
General Manager

My parents worked in hospitality so I was drawn to the sector and I knew from a young age that I wanted to work in hotel management. In between A Levels and starting my degree, I spent a year working in a hotel and I had the time of my life! Reflecting on it now, I realise that this was the first time that I began to engage with the wonderful world that hospitality offers in terms of diversity. I have worked in hotels ever since graduating, and I am now General Manager for the two hotels at Stamford Bridge. My job is to make sure that the two hotels run as smoothly, happily, successfully and as safely as possible.

Why is diversity and inclusion important at Millennium & Copthorne at Chelsea FC?

It is so important to make us not only a great place to work but also a great place to stay. We can only achieve that by taking the time to give our team the confidence to be everything that they are, and by forming an emotional connection with the customers who we deal with. It is also just as important to reflect on what can go wrong if equality, diversity and inclusion are not celebrated and how that can make people feel. The more multidimensional we are, the more interesting we become and the more confident we can become to celebrate ourselves!

How are you working towards promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace?

Every six weeks we host trust forums in which individuals from across the team get together to discuss everything that

we consider to be part of diversity and inclusion. The forums often take a "show and tell" format, which is such a valuable way for us to learn from each other. Listening to the experiences of a colleague who cherishes Ramadan, for example, makes people in the room feel excited and more informed. These forums highlight a broad range of topics that we now consider as part of diversity and inclusion, such as veganism and children who have had experience in care. We are now seeing further conversations about these topics within the business, which is so important.

Why is it important that all colleagues are involved in conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion?

If people are not involved in conversations, they are never going to learn from them. We would also be letting ourselves down if people wanted to ask a question but were worried to do so as

their phraseology might be wrong. In our trust forums, we understand that everybody is coming from a place of respect and are there to learn. The more we have these conversations, the more we are able to enlighten people and ourselves.

How are you working outside of Millennium & Copthorne at Chelsea FC to promote diversity and inclusion?

It is a passion of mine to establish links between hospitality and educational settings. I visit schools and colleges to talk about the great world that hospitality is in terms of careers and opportunities and to show that whoever you are and whatever you want to be, you are welcome in the sector. I am also an adoptive father and a foster father. We may only

be changing the world one child at a time, but that's still a step towards a world that can change. If people step up and make changes, the world will slowly become a better and more inclusive place.

What advice would you give to leaders looking to increase focus on diversity and inclusion?

Look in the mirror and see what you are proud of. Start to talk about these things and be interested in asking other people what they are proud of in themselves. When you start to do that, you begin to learn about people and encourage them to open up. This helps you to understand what it's like to walk in other people's shoes. If we can understand that, we can take a better interest in each other and make the world a happier place.





Karl Howard-Norris

Virgin Atlantic
Head of Aircraft Maintenance

I started in the industry as an apprentice at British Airways – I was passionate about engineering, saw an advert for the role and haven't looked back since! Following the apprenticeship, I developed further within BA, became a licensed engineer and worked on Concorde for many years until it retired. After Concorde, I took on management and then leadership roles, in Glasgow and London, before leaving BA in search of something different. I spent some time at SRTechnics, which is an independent Maintenance Repair and Overhaul organisation, and then four years ago I joined Virgin Atlantic as Head of Aircraft Maintenance.



Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

It's important to me to ensure everybody gets an opportunity, regardless of their background. When I took that apprenticeship, I had just arrived in London as an immigrant from Ireland, but I saw the opportunity and grabbed it. I want to live in a world where everyone gets their opportunity.

Why do you think D&I is important in the hospitality sector?

We serve all manner of people from all manner of backgrounds. If that is not reflected in the sector, we risk alienating people and missing commercial opportunities. You have to be in touch with the consumer.

What does being a role model mean to you?

The engineering world has historically been dominated by white men. Unless we hold people up as role models, we won't change that.

Today, we've got far more diversity in the lower levels of the company than we do in the leadership team. My job is to lead by example in how we recruit and train, casting the net wide to create more opportunity and more diversity at all levels of the organisation. We've hired some excellent women into apprenticeship roles. But it's a long-term game and you have to strike a balance between hiring straight into senior roles and also starting at the lower level and nurturing them into senior positions, which could take ten, fifteen or twenty years.

What steps have you taken at Virgin Atlantic to drive up D&I?

We do a lot through our apprenticeship programme,

and I'm pleased to say that this year's cohort was fifty percent women. There's still more to do in this area – I'm keen to celebrate the women we do have in our team, and give them a platform to share their experiences of working in engineering, and offer new perspectives which many in the broader organisation may not have recognised. But there's also a broader piece, around inclusion and belonging and what it means to be yourself at work. I think engineering can be a tricky space – perhaps D&I doesn't come as naturally to many who work in it, because of their background and way of thinking. So I really try and role model inclusion as a leader in my day-to-day.

What advice would you give to anyone looking to make change in their organisation?

You have to truly believe in it, understand the blockers and be resilient in the face of challenge.



Marina Kawarazaki

Dorchester Collection
Talent Attraction Specialist

Not knowing what I wanted to do at the very beginning of my career, I completed a number of internships in various industries following university. One of them was in a hotel, and I immediately fell in love with the family atmosphere and the warmth of the team. After this experience, I decided this was where I belonged and only looked for hotel jobs.

Following the internship, I worked at the Carlyle, A Rosewood Hotel in the human resources team for a year before moving to the UK. I joined Dorchester Collection a little over four years ago, starting as the People and Culture Administrator in the corporate office. In my current role as the Talent Attraction Specialist, I look after recruitment and our employer branding strategy. I love the work I do here and the progressive moves we are making as a business.

What role do you think the hospitality sector has to play in creating a more equal society?

I view this sector as a mirror to society, because it offers opportunities to people from different backgrounds. People join the sector at any point in their careers, and you don't need higher education to enter hospitality, which can be something that only those from privileged backgrounds have access to. Hospitality removes this barrier, allowing people

from low socio-economic statuses to excel, which in turn bridges the wage gap that people from underrepresented groups often experience.

What does great leadership look like to you and why is it important that it is diverse?

Transparency is key – people want to be informed about what's going on so that they can feel they are part of something bigger.

Inclusivity is important as well; these are the two traits I think are crucial for a good leader to foster a culture in which everyone feels a sense of belonging.

What does being a good role model, and leading from the top, mean to you?

For me, representation plays a big part in role models. It is powerful to have someone in a senior position you can see yourself reflected in, especially if you are from an underrepresented group. Our new VP of People & Culture Milet Lukey is the first Asian woman senior leader that I have worked with. Seeing her achievements has encouraged me to aim higher and that it is possible for me to get there.

And of course, while representation is important, inclusion should be the ultimate goal – role models should demonstrate the behaviors we want the rest of the organisation to see, and be bringing all of us along the journey with them.

Can you tell us about the work you do with the Ultimate Leaders Programme?

The Ultimate Leaders Programme (ULP) is our management training programme for recent graduates or high-

performing internal hires to develop their careers within Dorchester Collection. Our ULPs complete two six-month rotations in different departments in order to gain operational knowledge about the hotel and the skills that are needed to be a good leader. We work with Swiss Education Group to send all of our ULPs to Switzerland to learn how to embrace organisational change and to create psychologically safe cultures for their teams. It's a wonderful way to grow and retain our own talent into the future leaders of Dorchester Collection.

Why is D&I important to you?

It's essential for people to be able to bring their authentic selves to work. Having different experiences gives us diversity of thought which adds value to an organisation. Being in a recruitment role, I am given the power to make critical decisions in the hiring process. It's definitely not a power that I take lightly. I hope I've grown to a stage where I can call out bias on a regular basis not only throughout the recruitment process but also in general workplace conversations. I am lucky to be in an organisation where D&I is a priority and have leaders who would back me no matter what if I were doing the right thing.





Sophie Lawler

Total Fitness
CEO

I certainly never had a career plan. I was a gymnast as a child and fell into the fitness industry when I was paying my way through university. I trained as a fitness coach, then took on a role selling memberships, before landing my first leadership role as a general manager at Fitness First in Edinburgh. It was this GM position that gave me a passion for thinking about fitness in a commercial way: about customers, relationships, leadership, and turnarounds. I ended up staying at Fitness First for 13 years, moving through operations and marketing into strategy, to my final role there as Group Director – Strategy & Programming.

The chief executive role at Total Fitness came up entirely by happenstance. I had stepped down from Fitness First and was looking for a new role, taking on strategic assignments on a self-employed basis in the interim. I met the chief executive of Total Fitness, to discuss the possibility of my helping to build their turnaround plan, but as it turned out, the CEO had decided the role wasn't for him. I called the team at the majority shareholder North Edge Capital and things happened very quickly from there. Four and a half years later and in my first CEO role I've delivered two turnarounds and navigated the business through the pandemic and resulting financial restructuring.

What has been your experience of diversity and inclusion in the HTL sector?

When I was appointed to my first Executive Director role in 2012 at Fitness First, I was one of the first female directors in that business, and the only woman serving on the Board at the time. Despite this, the conversation around gender diversity has never felt integral to my career journey. It was only when I became a CEO that it became part of my narrative and of interest to others. Until this point I'd simply never considered it since I had always just focused my energy on the

“ I'm a champion of anyone who wants to unlock their growth.

task in hand. Considering my gender as relevant was just not the way I chose to see the world.

I think in some ways that outlook has been helpful, as it has helped to inform my approach to D&I at Total Fitness where I think about the issue far more broadly, beyond the purview of data and statistics. I consider levels of team engagement and trust/psychological safety first as the underpinnings



of a diverse workplace that is rich in its thinking.

What does D&I look like at Total Fitness?

The mark of whether my business is inclusive is if my team think it is – and they do. We ask them to rate inclusion at Total Fitness on a scale of one to ten, and we score consistently above nine.

I think a lot of this is down to our focus on building a culture of personal growth, however that looks for each team member. For some it will be professional growth, but for many it's more personal - like overcoming a limiting belief or building better relationships with a loved one. And as one of three master trainers who deliver our personal leadership programme to team members at all levels of our business, I'm a champion of anyone who wants to unlock their growth. Sometimes

it's career progression, but sometimes it's more personal, like leaving a relationship that isn't working out.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I'd tell her to be a little bit more humble, to listen more, and to let people find the answers in their own time. I'd also tell her not to mimic role models, but to learn from them. About mid-way through my professional life, as a woman new to the boardroom, I started modelling my career on someone whom I admired. But it was entirely inauthentic, and it created a high level of personal stress because I was constantly measuring my behaviour against someone else. In reality, I was great at the job without having to copy another person's leadership style.



Kat Parsons

ISS
UK Head of D&I

I started my career in the environmental sector, working for oil and gas and construction, which is very male-dominated. I worked in that industry for 16 years, and it took a lot to work my way up through the ranks to become a senior leader in the business. But I still found roadblocks everywhere.

Three years ago, I decided to change industry completely. I moved across to ISS to work in facilities management as an HSCQ Manager. As soon as I walked through the door, I realised it is such a diverse workplace. I ran a menopause project in ISS, which was really well received. As a result of that, when a position opened up for a Head of Diversity and Inclusion for the UK and Ireland, I was asked to apply.

Now, I look after around 30,000 people across the UK and Ireland, running the entire D&I strategy which looks at six intersectional dimensions including Generations & Age, Culture, Race and Ethnicity, Pride, Gender Balance, Abilities and Veterans. Everyone is so passionate here, and they just needed someone to glue it all together – that's what I do.



Can you explain the Menopause Awareness campaign you were leading and how it has impacted those working at ISS?

It started off as an awareness session which was delivered as a lunch-and-learn during the Covid lockdowns. Surprisingly, there were a lot of male colleagues that had joined, and the session

was really well attended – with amazing feedback from those who joined. Shortly after that, I set up a working group to follow up and plan for more initiatives to support people going through the menopause. We created some toolbox talks focusing on the symptoms and workplace alternations, which is a nice method to get information out to sites. We then hosted

a 'menopause café', which is people – typically women – meeting up to talk about symptoms and hormones. We decided to call it the 'HRTea rooms', for people to discuss anything related to hormone replacement therapy, transitioning, menstrual cycles and even prostate cancer (because the treatment causes menopausal symptoms in men).

Why is D&I important to you?

I never felt psychological safety in my early career. I would just squeeze myself to fit into whichever environment I was in. I would twist myself to demonstrate 'traditional' leadership, which I shouldn't have had to! Of course, it's a skill being able to address your audience, but no one should have to act like someone they're not. That's why I think creating a work environment for every individual to be themselves is so important.

What does great leadership look like to you?

Empathy is number one. I always like the saying, "respect before understanding." Approachability is important, and I love the fact that people feel comfortable emailing me – even though my inbox can get absolutely rammed! I want people to know that

they can reach out, that there's safe space and that I'm willing to listen. A good sense of humour is helpful – I discuss heavy topics a lot of the time, but I always try to twist a bit of humour in so that people feel comfortable, understand and the message resonates.

You have done excellent work in promoting D&I, can you talk about some obstacles you faced on this journey?

It was not easy to get information about menopause across genders and generations. To help tackle this, I organised a podcast with three men of different seniority within the business. I asked them, "As a leader, how do you think that you can support someone who is going through any one of these 60 symptoms of menopause?" They started talking about their wives and mothers. That's brilliant. That's how we tried to raise awareness across the business and this is working across other 'taboo' subjects now too.

What advice would you give to young leaders wanting to join HTL?

Absolutely be you, be your authentic self. If the business that you're in is not willing to accept that, you should move on. I stayed far too long in an industry where I wasn't reaching my full potential. The HTL sector really cares about D&I!



Neil Poulter

Merlin Entertainments
General Manager Thorpe Park Resort

Growing up, Chessington World of Adventures was my local attraction and I worked there throughout holidays and weekends whilst in education. Merlin is a fantastic business to work and develop within and there were always great examples of people who started on the frontline and made their way to senior roles. After graduating, I worked across a range of areas at Merlin including HR, operations and commercial teams before starting my management career when I joined Thorpe Park in 2007. I remained with Merlin until 2014, leaving to become a General Manager at David Lloyd Leisure for a three year period, followed by a further year as Operations Director at KidZania in Westfield, Shepherds Bush. I then returned to Thorpe Park and Merlin as Operations Director in 2018 and I am now General Manager - a role which I have held for just over 18 months.



“ When people feel valued and that the workplace is inclusive, it is a great place to be – conversations are progressive, engagement is better and then so is performance.

Why is D&I important to you?

It is so important for people to feel safe, have a sense of belonging and to feel that they can be themselves. When people feel valued and that the workplace is inclusive, it is a great place to be – conversations are progressive, engagement is better and then so is

performance. We measure engagement across Merlin through our annual culture / engagement survey which includes specific questions for inclusion and these allow us to strive to keep making improvements.

What have you been involved in with Merlin's UK Diversity and Inclusion taskforce?

I work closely with our local attraction taskforce, which I lead with the support of a number of key HR personnel. We meet regularly to discuss many factors of identity including age, gender, neurodiversity, race, and religion and set out initiatives to increase inclusion. I think it is incredibly important to become 'challengers', and to create a 'challenge culture'. Our forum provides an opportunity for anybody that wants to participate, provide feedback and suggest plans for improvement. I welcome

transparency and no topic is off limits. The wider UK taskforce is the coming together of the UK site leads, sharing best practice, ideas and plotting the best next steps forward together.

How do you support people looking to join the industry?

It isn't always clear how to get into the industry and I am always happy to offer my time and support to those who are considering a career in attractions. I'm keen to support a route in or provide career path advice for underrepresented groups who are passionate about joining the industry.

Do you think that having role models plays an important role in starting conversations around D&I?

As leaders of a business, showing authenticity and vulnerability is important. Showing that we don't have

all the answers but that we are open and willing to learn creates better conversations and allows us to keep moving forward. I have been fortunate to have had a number of really strong female role models that I have worked for during my career that have been pivotal to my development.

What advice would you give to businesses looking to focus on D&I?

You have to lead from the front and make a stand on any behaviours, no matter how small, that are having a negative impact on your environment and culture. If culture is who we are and how we act, then we have to step in and stand up for what we believe in and have more progressive conversations. Finally, start where it's hardest because that is the longest road and the sooner you start, the sooner you will get improving.



Laura Purdey

Sodexo
HR Director - Schools & Universities

I started my career in HR after graduating and I worked in HR administration for a handling agent for private jets at an airport. I got good experience, but I wanted somewhere I could thrive and grow a career. As a place to progress, Sodexo really appealed to me – with its global presence and the fact it works across multiple industries. You can find Sodexo in business and industry; schools and universities; sports and leisure; energy and resources; government and agencies; healthcare; justice and defence. My work focuses on schools and universities.

The caring nature of the hospitality industry, and the ability it has to make people's lives better on an everyday basis, is what keeps me in the industry and is what attracted me to it in the first place. We are there for people throughout the cycle of life.

Why is D&I important to you?

I identify as female, and I'm also married to a woman and those life experiences really inform why D&I is so important to me.

I understand how feeling that you are different or apprehensive about being yourself can impact you. As a parent, I want to change things for young people too... For there to be as much knowledge, understanding and compassion as possible in the world, for the next generation, is so important.

What does being a role model mean to you?

It means being myself. For a lot of people that can take quite a lot of courage. Sharing stories and life experiences with people is an important part of being

a role model and I think it's a privilege. I hope that me being a role model gives people reassurance and confidence to step into those shoes too when it feels right for them.

What role do you think the hospitality sector has to play in creating a more equal society?

The hospitality sector is there for people, every day, at every stage of life in different contexts. Whether that be in a school, being looked after in a hospital or just going out to a live event and having a great time. We're there to look after people, and to make those environments not just the most comfortable, but the most welcoming and supportive. We have the ability to inspire people, because we are everywhere.

You have been a driving force in Sodexo's D&I journey. Can you talk a bit about the PRIDE employee network?

For nearly a year now, I've been the Co-Lead of our global Pride Network. We also have local chapters which lead efforts in the country they are located in. It's a privilege to be leading the umbrella network to think about what direction we can go in next.

I co-lead with my colleague AJ Francavilla, who I have learnt a lot from. One of the biggest achievements to date is being awarded advocate status for work by Workplace Pride. It's the highest level you can be awarded in that benchmark, and to be recognised you must demonstrate the work you are doing to push the D&I agenda for the LGBTQ+ community. We won't stop at that, the world continues

to change as we will continue to be there for our LGBTQ+ employees and communities.

What advice would you give to leaders wanting to focus on driving D&I?

It will enrich your business. I would ask leaders to think about the people they have around them that they care about whether at work or at home. It's more likely than not that at least one of these people, a parent, a sister, a brother, a friend, your child, will be neurodiverse, or LGBTQ+, or have a disability or a mental health issue, just as examples. I would ask leaders to think about how they would like the people they care about to be treated in the workplace. That thinking should be applied to their business practices. Having people in your business who feel like they belong can be very powerful.





Jenny Redmond

PizzaExpress
Talent and Inclusion Partner

My background is mainly recruitment, despite training as a journalist. I started my career agency-side, hiring for publishing houses and PR agencies before moving to Shelter, the housing and homelessness charity. I joined PizzaExpress as a Recruitment Specialist in January 2015, focused on hiring into the Restaurant Support, or central support teams. As time has gone on, I've been involved in more project work – expanding the talent side of my role to focus on apprenticeship recruitment, undergraduate schemes, managing the Kickstart scheme and working with external organisations to expand our talent attraction.

Starting to focus more on inclusion felt like a natural step. Not just from a recruitment perspective (because it should be obvious how important it is that recruitment processes are accessible and inclusive) or from a talent perspective, but because we're not getting the very best from people if we don't allow them freedom to express their true self.



“Championing the importance of D&I should be the standard we set.”

Why is diversity and inclusion important to you?

I'd rather flip this question on its head. Championing the importance of D&I should be the standard we set, and not necessarily just for individual and personal reasons. It should be expected of all of us.

Why do you think it's important to bring all colleagues along the diversity and inclusion journey?

D&I has to be present all the way through the

business. It can't be a bolt on, an after-thought or the responsibility of one specialist or niche team – it must be weaved into everything we do.

What advice would you give to anyone looking to drive change within their organisation?

Listen. Everyone's experience is valid, and everyone has a role to play in driving change.

Can you describe the work you're doing to encourage conversations around diversity and inclusion within PizzaExpress?

We've built a framework for inclusion which encourages conversations. It's our Listen, Learn, Lead framework which can be applied to any aspect of

D&I or wellbeing. Our aim was to have something in place that allowed subsequent activity to be intersectional, and to empower our people to drive their own personal journeys. It allows us to facilitate conversations, referred to internally as Listening Sessions, to find out more about people's experience in life, not just at work, and to workshop

ways forward.

Holding these Listening Sessions centrally means we can easily action any ideas within our central support function teams, but we also have plans to launch ERG 'our Communities' next year – providing dedicated space for people to connect, drive change and foster a space for collaboration around D&I.





Shanika Trotman

easyJet
Partnerships Manager

I chose not to go to university when the time came as I wanted to support my family. I went straight into the world of work, starting in retail and moving into local government. My time working there was empowering and made me realise that I enjoy helping people.

I moved back into retail and worked at Wickes in digital merchandising. I was involved with their D&I initiative by being part of their employee network, which I felt had a positive impact on making a safer workspace. Following Wickes I worked for insurtech firm BGL Group, in analytics and research which looked at making customer experiences better. I also joined their people action group with a focus on culture, diversity and inclusion in team building.

I was always drawn to joining easyJet because I love travel and there was a family feel to the business I admired. I started in the digital analytics team, and now I am in a partnerships role which I absolutely love.

Why is D&I important to you?

I have experienced challenges to my sense of belonging in the past. As a mixed-race woman, I've found that I don't necessarily identify with one specific group. I've always wanted to explore what this means on a deeper level, and help others realise that it is okay to want to explore your own cultural diversity. Inclusion is about that feeling of belonging and being accepted for who you are.

Why do you think it's important to bring all colleagues along the D&I journey?

I think something we don't always touch on in D&I is the importance of allyship for creating inclusion. People feeling that they can express their whole selves is

so important, and ultimately, you get the best out of your people if they are able to be themselves. It should be prioritised that people feel like they have a voice and are being seen as well as heard. It is about showing diversity and inclusion isn't just a tick box exercise.

What does being a role model for inclusion mean to you?

It means creating a safe space. I feel blessed to be part of a conversation where people can say to me "I don't really understand this, how do I express this differently?".

I like to think that being a role model is empowering for other people as well as me. Socioeconomic diversity is important to me, especially because I have made my career without a degree background. Being

a role model for inclusion is a way to show young people that careers don't always go in straight lines.

What advice would you give to anyone looking to drive change from within their organisation?

Persistence is key. Even if it is little and often, drip feeding information can be vital for making sure people are aware of the standard we should be at in terms of D&I. It doesn't always need to be a massive statement. A small drop in the ocean can cause a massive ripple so don't be afraid to stand on your little soapbox and share your messages.

Can you describe the work you're doing to encourage conversations around inclusion and drive-up diversity within easyJet?

I am actively part of the Trailblazer community for D&I within easyJet. As part

of that, I lead one of the data streams encouraging declaration rates among our staff, which can then help us shape our policies. We have been doing a lot of work on personal pronouns to make sure everyone understands their importance and have been working on becoming part of the Stonewall Index. My work with the Trailblazers is filtering into my life outside of work. I am looking to mentor at schools in the local consortium to drive D&I conversations with the next generation.

“ Being a role model for inclusion is a way to show young people that careers don't always go in straight lines.





Andrea Wareham

Pret A Manger
Chief People Officer

I've had the enormous privilege to work at Pret A Manger for the last 22 years. Over that time we have grown from 70 UK shops with 1,500 employees to 500 shops in 13 countries and 10,000 employees. We employ 106 different nationalities and have a great gender balance. For the last 15 years I've been part of the Executive Team as the People Director/Chief People Officer.

Prior to Pret, I worked for two years in the People Support function at Arthur Andersen. Before that I cut my HR teeth at Harrods where I was HR Manager for the fantastic Foodhalls.



“ Working alongside people who are different from yourself creates a vibrancy.

What does D&I mean to you?

For me, D&I is about welcoming together different people. Working alongside people who are different from yourself creates a vibrancy that's hard to measure. To enable this, it is not simply about ensuring fair treatment as sometimes you need to give an extra helping hand to those that need it. The inclusion bit is as important as the diversity bit as it's not good enough just to have lots of different people working together, they have to genuinely feel part of one team.

What does D&I look like at Pret?

Pret is such an interesting

place to work. It's diverse, it's dynamic, and it's also very humbling. You get to hear other people's stories and that makes your own world a bigger place.

There are a few initiatives that really stand out. Our Support Centre team work two days in a shop every year. I'll be standing on the till between, for example, a young Spanish student who's doing an MBA, and a member of the Rising Star Employment Programme – which means they were recently homeless. In the eyes of the customer and each other we are all equal which is exactly how it should be. It's an amazing, levelling experience.

Can you speak a little bit about the work you're doing with the Pret Foundation, and with the Ukrainian Employment Programme?

The Pret Foundation has been going for 28 years now. I've been a Trustee for ten of those years and have been leading the Foundation internally for

three. We do three things at the Pret Foundation: we ensure the food left over at the end of every day goes to feed the homeless at shelters; we give grants to grassroots charities focused on homelessness; and we run the Rising Stars programme, which is a three-month training and support programme in our shops for those who have been experiencing homelessness. We used to welcome around 30 people a year however this year it will be 75, and next year it will be 100. Around 80% of those we train receive a permanent offer to work at Pret after three months which really helps people get back on their feet.

Most recently, we launched the Ukraine Employment Programme, offering a job, English tuition and emotional and financial support to those who have been forced to leave Ukraine because of the war. Not only have we been able to give almost 250 people paid employment at Pret, but we've also placed

many in other organisations including the NHS. It's one of the most brilliant things we've ever done. When we heard the news about Ukraine we just said 'we have to help' and it only took us about two weeks to get everything set up.

What advice would you give to leaders looking to drive up their focus on D&I?

Firstly, I'd say find your starting point. We found it really useful to get someone in to independently review our D&I position and give us guidance. Then gather data so you can measure progress. And then my advice would be to keep it simple. We can be good in HR at making things complicated, but you just need a straightforward plan with two or three D&I focused activities on it each year. And finally include your employees – they will let you know what to do and how to do it in ways which make the biggest difference to them.





Julie Wilby

Rare Restaurants
Head of People

I studied hospitality management and worked for a small inn in America during my placement. The lady I was working under set an example of what an HR manager shouldn't be. That was my first introduction to HR, and its people management side. It made me realise that I am not an operations person. My first job after university was HR assistant at The Savoy where I stayed for two years recruiting chefs for Anton Edelmann back in 1999.

I spent most of my HR career in five-star hotels, including The Dorchester. At age thirty, I took some time out to start a family and came back to HR in hotels part time, as well as event catering. I stepped into the role of Office Manager at Head Office for Rare Restaurants when I returned. I later became more involved in HR projects, and have been heading up our HR function since November.



Can you talk about the mentoring and training schemes you have set up, and how they have impacted Rare Restaurants?

We have introduced mentoring, reverse mentoring and a roundtable committee. We need to build momentum, and more and more people are reaching out for those more career-minded mentoring conversations, for those thinking beyond working on the floor of our restaurants.

As for our reverse mentoring, our CEO, MD, CFO and Operations Director have been coupled with a reverse mentor to speak about the wider D&I piece on the agenda. The Rare Roundtable is also an important part of our D&I agenda, it's a forum for diversity discussion and holding us to account on our DE&I commitments. We have set up Social, Impact and Wellbeing Committees as well.

Why is it important to bring colleagues along on the D&I journey?

You want as many voices as possible. No one person has all the answers when it comes to D&I, so you need a diverse group of people to be represented in those conversations. In our first meeting, we had a great representation of different nationalities and religions. And everyone should have an opinion on D&I. I cannot speak for 1,200 employees, I need to hear their voices.

What advice would you give to your younger self coming into hospitality?

I think it's really good to understand what part of hospitality you enjoy. Whether it's the restaurant business, hotels or support departments. I think it's really helpful to have full exposure to different aspects of the business too.

What advice would you give to somebody joining the sector for the first time?

If you are open to learning

from new experiences, you'll find your niche. Don't be afraid to come away from something as well – I had children and needed to do what was right for me there and then. If you've got 30 to 40 years of a working life ahead of you, don't be afraid to try new things because it will enrich you for the better.

Can you talk about some other inspiring role models that you've seen in HTL?

My HR Director at Grosvenor House, Marianne Barlow, has been my best mentor. She held me accountable and was always very honest with me. Being the leader that I am now, she sits on my shoulder. In fact, I still go to her for advice today.

As a leader, Rare's Managing Director, Ross Butler is a role model for me. He has such a calming influence and he has my personal and professional development high on his agenda, which is really encouraging at this stage of my career.



About Us

About WiHTL

WiHTL is a Collaboration Community devoted to increasing Diversity and Inclusion across Hospitality, Travel and Leisure. Our mission is to support companies across these industries to create diverse and inclusive environments and to positively impact five million employees globally by 2025.

For more information visit:

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