

Women to Watch in Hospitality, Travel, Leisure and Retail Index

The 2024 Edition from WiHTL & DiR and The MBS Group



MBS



Foreword

It has been six years since the inaugural edition of the Women to Watch Index and with every passing year, I am greatly impressed by the incredible women working within Hospitality, Travel, Leisure (HTL) and Retail, their professional and personal successes and the broad spectrum of careers available within our industry.

For the first time, the 2024 edition, produced in partnership with The MBS Group, combines HTL and Retail to recognise the broader impact these women are having across the sectors our Collaboration Community focuses on. We have also added an exciting new section, 'Women to Watch in Technology & Engineering', underlining the increasing presence of women in these traditionally male dominated roles. Women play a critical role in these areas within the HTL and Retail sectors and it is encouraging to see how many nominations for inclusion in the Index we have received in this inaugural section.

The fantastic interview responses throughout the Index bear a resemblance to a practical manual for women: this is not theoretical narrative – this is a curated chronicle of lived experiences by role models who are helping to carve out a path for more junior women. Hearing retrospective advice they would give to their younger selves – “fail fast!” – and how they define success after having reached it, provides an educational landscape for ambitious, professional women.

However, a level-playing field has not yet been achieved for women in the workplace. WiHTL & Diversity in Retail's 2024 Working Women Survey has brought to light the challenges which stubbornly remain for working women across our sectors. Passionate ambitions and aspirations are being muted by a lack of flexibility on offer and sadly experiences of discrimination. Among many others, one recurring suggestion from the more than 1,000 respondents on how to progress was to ensure there were visible women role models: the Women to Watch Index goes some way to highlighting who these role models are in our industry and how powerfully they can inspire other women to define their own individual paths towards success.

In addition to congratulating all the women included in the Index and thanking them for their time to answer our questions, I would like to thank Elliott Goldstein and his team at The MBS Group for their superb work in pulling the Index together. The Index would not have come to life without the dedication and commitment of my team, in particular Joanna Aunon, Joanna Lockyer, Laura Date Lee, Ashton Weedall and Sarah Heath.



Tea Colaianni

Founder and Chair
WiHTL & DiR

Introduction

The MBS Group is once again delighted to partner with WiHTL & DiR to present the Women to Watch in Hospitality, Travel, Leisure and Retail Index. For six consecutive years, it has been our privilege to work alongside Tea Colaiani and her team as we highlight the women leaders who are making a lasting impact in their organisations and our sectors.

This Index was first launched back in 2019, at a time when a supposed lack of women leaders was frequently cited as a barrier to progress on diversity. Six years and hundreds of interviews later, we can certainly say that the Women to Watch we have featured have busted that myth!

This year, for the first time, we have combined our industry focus, celebrating more than 100 inspiring senior executives across both the hospitality, travel and leisure and retail sectors. Both industries are built on the same foundations of customer excellence – and it's clear that every leader featured in this Index has a steadfast commitment to creating memorable experiences, products and services for consumers.

We have also carved out a section for women in senior technology and engineering roles. As many discuss in this publication, our industries are at a critical inflexion point when it comes to the use of technology and advancements in artificial intelligence. Given the significant ethical and reputational risks associated with the adoption of AI tools, it has never been more important to have gender balance and diverse representation around the decision-making table. The Women to Watch in Technology and Engineering chapter highlights the leaders who are making an impact in what has traditionally been a male-dominated field, and it is our

hope that it will inspire the next generation of women leaders to pursue technology roles in the HTL and retail sectors.

It has been such an honour to bring together this year's Index. These pages are full of personal and professional anecdotes, insights on career progression, reflections on lessons learnt, and inspiring stories about the power of role models. The women featured come from all corners of our industries – from aviation to ecommerce – and from all walks of life.

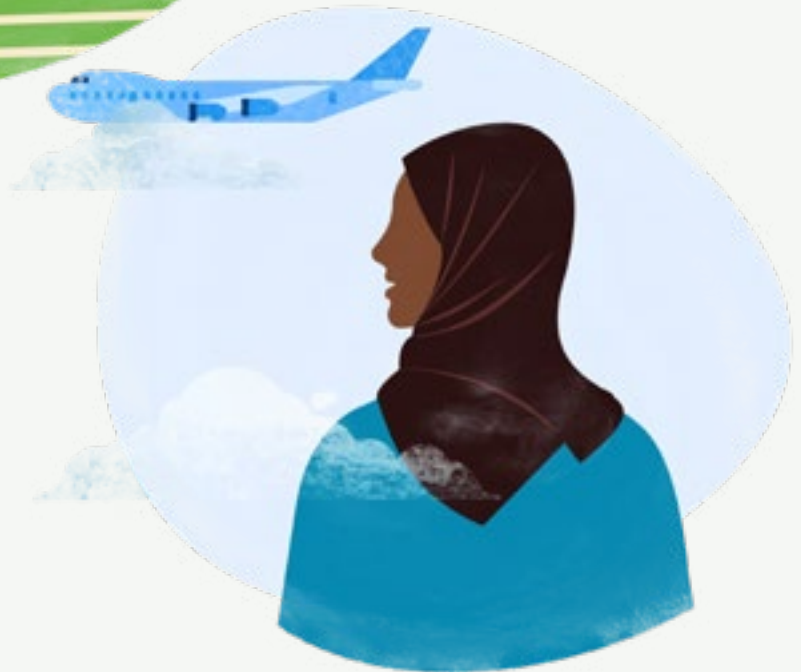
Since the first edition of this report, the HTL and retail sectors have become more diverse and inclusive places – but there is still a long way to go. We have a responsibility to celebrate role models and to shine a light on the many different routes to the top, in order to pave the way for the next generation of diverse leaders in our industries.

I would like to thank every senior executive featured in this Index for taking the time to share their story, and to the team at WiHTL & DiR, who play such an integral role in making our sectors a more inclusive place. Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge my team at The MBS Group – in particular Aelf Hewitson (the Director of our Retail Practice), Thirza Danielson (the Director of our Hospitality, Travel and Leisure practice), Miske Ali, Imogen Sewell (our phenomenal editor), Callum Orr and Simon Pryde-More, for their hard work and dedication in bringing this publication together.



Elliott Goldstein

Managing Partner
The MBS Group



Women to Watch in HTL

Inspiring 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. Our hope is that this Index sheds light on the depth and breadth of female talent that exists in the sector, and inspires the next generation of women leaders in HTL.



Leah Anderson

Company **Compass Group UK & Ireland** / Job Title **Director of Finance for Foodbuy**



I started my career with Unilever on their Graduate scheme and qualified as a CIMA accountant whilst training. The fast-moving consumer goods industry gave me a great understanding of not only how foods are manufactured but also interactions with

customers, retailers, and the wider market.

I found a natural love of trading finance, dealing with products, promotions, NPD and innovation. After five years with Unilever, I spent some time with Tate Galleries and then I was offered a position at Sainsbury's. Firstly, back into trading, looking after product sales and profit for the convenience stores and then quickly getting a promotion to Head of Finance, in the Store Takings Team (all till receipts and reconciliations) and then Head of Finance supporting operational teams. I was also fortunate to support on the integration of Nectar into Sainsbury's and, as a result, I was promoted to Director of Finance for Marketing and Loyalty. My time at Sainsbury's taught me so much, ensuring we always had something new and innovative to keep interest and loyalty.

I took some time away to complete my training as a Yoga instructor before embarking on the role at Compass as the Director of Finance for Foodbuy. What an amazing company – its reach and its standing globally, but also the diverse clients and ultimately customers that we serve.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

On my own journey I have recognised the power not only of coaches, mentors, allies, supportive line managers, peers but also role models. They are an incredibly important part of seeing your own path develop and the possibilities. Sometimes if you can't see someone like you ahead in the journey it's hard to believe it's possible. Be the change you want to see! (That's a great quote I have heard over the years, and what drives me to try to be a role model).

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

Just by me being here in Compass and in Foodbuy is ensuring the landscape is changing and dial is being moved. It's the little things as well as the big things: from how I encourage others to think differently about their recruitment through to how we include and develop colleagues internally.

Speaking at our events, I have colleagues come and talk to me afterwards telling me that they can see me, being myself and showing you don't need to

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Who is your role model?

My Dad – his whole work ethic and the values he instilled in me have really helped.

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

Undertaking humanitarian

projects and teaching yoga around the world.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

AI and Tech and the changes it will bring to the sector.



be someone else to get to this level. Here we are free to speak up and share lived experiences, which is really empowering. Our Mission to a Million commitment also aims to drive this agenda with clear targets on diversity.

What do you predict for the future of HTL?

Compass and Foodbuy is on a brilliant journey, going from strength to strength, and surrounded by a passionate workforce. Market volatility will continue, but the resilience of global supply chains will continue to evolve and compensate. There

will be much more focus in all parts of the sector moving towards net zero and sustainability practices, especially here in the UK. Compass is already on this journey – and I am so glad to be a part of it!

“ Sometimes if you can't see someone like you ahead of you on the journey it's hard to believe it's possible.



Reena Appadoo

Company **Moto Hospitality** / Job Title **Risk Director**



My motto is "Making Safety Simple (Standards, Innovation, Measurable, People, Learning, Enabler)" and have applied this thinking throughout my 20+ years of working in the field of environmental health in local government,

and then in safety leadership roles in hospitality and retail businesses.

I specialise in safety strategy, culture, and crisis-management, and always look at what can be achieved from a people centric and operational lens. I have a proven record of leading successful safety management and cultural change programmes in complex, multi-site organisations and I am a firm believer in adopting a proactive, evidence-based, and practical approach to continually improve safety compliance, capability, and communication within a workplace.

I like to think outside of the box and explore creative and tech solutions when it comes to delivering colleague training and awareness campaigns. Teamwork is key to my role, and I am a firm believer of developing individual and team skills and supporting colleagues to build their own unique selling point as part of their career progression.

I enjoy mentoring and coaching others new to the profession, and I am a community volunteer with a passion for experimental cooking and Mauritian sega dancing!



What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

If putting a smile on a customer's face is your thing then jump right in! The pace is fast; thinking on your feet is key; no two days are the same; customers are different; learning is lifelong; but being part of a team that helps make a positive difference to someone will stay with you forever.

main blockers. Active promotion, tailored mentoring, networking, and awareness of career paths and the challenges for different groups will help us move forward.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Listen to the inner voice in you and always believe in your abilities and worth, especially when times are tough.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

In my early 20s my first mentor advised me to listen to all sides of a story before piecing together the final version – wise words! All my mentors have shared knowledge and personal experiences which have helped to shape my thinking and approach as a leader of people and of a function.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Helping someone overcome their challenge.

QUICKFIRE

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Michelle Obama.

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

An American chemist recently claiming that adding a pinch of salt was required for the perfect brew – news to me and not sure how my daily cup of Yorkshire tea will taste with this savoury twist!

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

Working weekdays in the public sector as an EHO and as an event planner at weekends.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Our transition to cleaner energy products for consumers and workplace initiatives for colleagues.

Who is your role model?

My mother.

“ Being part of a team that helps make a positive difference to someone will stay with you forever.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL? How can we overcome them?

I believe that personal experience, perception, and confidence are the

Vicky Barber

Company Popeyes Louisiana Chicken UK / Job Title Marketing Director



In September 2021 I started an exciting opportunity, launching global brand Popeyes Louisiana Chicken into the UK, 50 years since its US debut with more than 4,000 restaurants globally. Since then, we've opened more than 40 restaurants.

The global top performing site is now in London, and the brand was recently dubbed the 'Hype Monster' by Eater, and International Newcomer of the Year by MCA.

As UK Marketing Director, I've had the opportunity to set and implement our launch strategy, bringing together all disciplines of marketing to deliver a strong distinctive brand position. Building an incredible team and network of agencies, and working with a cross-functional leadership team and investors to scale quickly. I am focused on building a brand with a vision to become the most loved QSR brand in the UK.

I previously worked at popular restaurant brands Franco Manca and PizzaExpress after starting my career as a graduate at Kraft Heinz. Originally working in finance after studying Economics at University, I was able to discover different functions and pursue a different career path within the programme. I've been supported by many positive role models and mentors throughout my career, I love what I do and surround myself with people who share similar values and visions.

your vision so empower them to act autonomously and ensure communication is strong throughout.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Build your network from day one. Talk to people from other businesses, across industries and never be afraid to ask questions. Put yourself forward for opportunities, join panels at events, be professional but most importantly be yourself.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I've seen the move towards a 'listening culture' at all levels within the sector. As leaders, it's important to make it feel safe for

people to share real authentic experiences in the workplace and for people to really understand the challenges their colleagues face.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Both female and male role models have had such a positive impact on my career – but the sector is still very male dominated at board level. For many, having that person to look up to and identify with is important. Highlighting women leaders and sharing their experiences make stories accessible to many people who may have lacked the confidence and network before, who might need that inspiration and encouragement to step out of their comfort zone.

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

The Founder. It was so insightful on an industry I've spent the last few years learning so much about. Fascinating how you can simultaneously respect someone and dislike them at the same time.

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

I started my career in finance after studying economics so potentially a financial institution.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The continued emergence of AI and how this is adopted within hospitality. Our people will always remain at the heart of our sector but I'm certain AI will help to improve a more seamless customer experience.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

The Prince and Princess of Wales. I'd love to have a glass of wine with them... we would need Chatham House rules though!

“ Highlighting women leaders and sharing their experiences make stories accessible to many people who may have lacked the confidence and network before.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Leaders must have a strong vision, and take their team on a journey. A great leader can delegate opportunities with strong decision making, but is willing to learn along the way, taking risks but not being reckless.

With this comes an appreciation for fairness and integrity, always giving proper credit for accomplishments and acknowledging mistakes. As a leader you've recruited a team you want to achieve

Liz Benison

Company ISS A/S / Job Title **Chief People and Transformation Officer**



Following a career in general management, I have recently taken a management board position at ISS A/S to run the People and Culture function globally, and also to drive the execution of our enterprise strategy. This role brings together my experiences around

turnarounds at companies like CSC and Serco, my skills around creating environments where people thrive and succeed, and my passion for excellent customer service.

Starting life in the automotive industry in the early 1990s, I then spent time at a tech start up before moving more into the consulting and outsourcing space. With stints at global organisations like Capgemini, I had the opportunity to work across multiple geographies and cultures, and learn how to manage and lead in a complex matrix organisation. I also had the opportunity to do one non-executive role at Openreach.

All of this experience has culminated in making my current role a great fit, and being in facilities management – managing prestige facilities for blue chip customers, servicing state of the art hospitals, keeping production environments clean and safe – is extremely satisfying as I get to focus on developing our customer-facing workforce of around 350,000 whilst creating great workplace experiences for our customers.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Looking back over the years, whenever I felt challenged in a situation, I would question my ability and doubt myself, rather than recognising my strengths, and playing to those. I would therefore tell my younger self to look around the room, and recognise myself as worthy – then get on with it!! And... avoid those perms in the 90s!!

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I find this really interesting right now, as I think we are reaching an inflexion point in how we describe good leadership. Characteristics that are now getting their rightful recognition are things like: integrity, authenticity, ability to listen and empathise, the ability to understand what makes others thrive and belong. Whilst leaders will always be called upon to take

tough decisions at times, a world run by more considered leaders, who better evaluate risks before taking action can only be a good thing.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

I worked for a company that was bought by a bigger and more mature organisation. The CEO of the acquirer was one of the best leaders I have ever known and I learned two vital lessons from her: the first was that you have to get into the detail of an operation, and drive the numbers, you can't delegate this until you really understand what makes a business thrive; the second was that

however important your job is to you, your health, family and friends are at least as important and you need to take equal care of those during your career.

What does 'success' mean to you?

This has massively changed for me in the last few years. Up until recently, success was delivering well on one thing, so that I could move onto the next.

In recent years, it is much more about creating environments where others can do exactly that. I find myself far prouder now when someone I have managed and championed succeeds in what they're doing and new doors open for them.

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Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

I've been re-watching a lot of Barack Obama's speeches recently so I'll invite the Obamas please!

Who is your role model?

I have several, as I recognise that no one individual is excellent in all aspects. They would include: my mum for keeping me grounded and centred on my family; an old sales coach who taught me all I need to know about selling; the boss of the company who bought our start-up who taught me about discipline;

and my dad, who as a CFO taught me all about business ethics.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Where there is change, there is always opportunity, and there is certainly a lot of change right now. From new ways of working and the role of hybrid, to finding ways to incorporate AI into customer experience, and doing all this for multiple generations who are now active in the workplace, this makes for a very exciting time.

Amy Bornmann

Company Travel + Leisure Co. / Job Title Director, Club & Association Governance – Wyndham Destinations

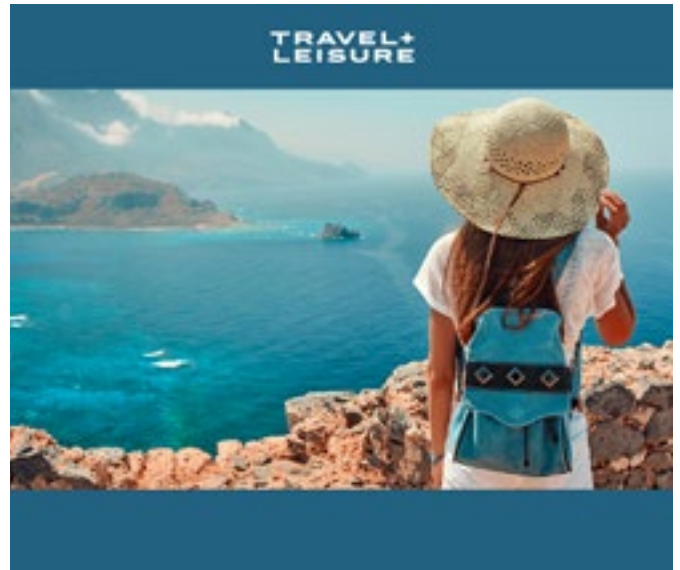


I am a seasoned hospitality professional with over two decades of experience. A paralegal by training and education, I have seamlessly merged my legal expertise with my passion for hospitality. Currently, I play a pivotal role in supporting the governance of more than

200 timeshare owners' associations across the US, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Leading a team of dedicated association management professionals, I ensure that these associations thrive.

Diversity and inclusion are not just words to me: they are principles I live by. I proudly serve as the co-president of our company's Women In Travel Diversity Resource Group (DRG) and am an active ally for our other DRGs. In the community, my commitment to philanthropy shines through my role as co-chair of the Stars & Pars Gala, where we raise funds to benefit Give Kids The World Village, a cause that resonates deeply with me. Mentoring is another way I give back, sharing my knowledge and experience with aspiring professionals.

Beyond my career, I am a devoted wife and mother of two, finding joy in family life. My life is a harmonious blend of dedication to my profession, commitment to diversity, and love for my family and community.



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Who is your role model?

My role models are all the remarkable women who have come before me, breaking barriers, and defying odds.

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

The most interesting thing I've watched recently is the television series *Lessons in Chemistry* a captivating series that combines science, humour, and feminism in a thought-provoking

narrative, making it both entertaining and intellectually stimulating.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I am most excited about the future of our industry's increasing emphasis on diversity, inclusivity, and sustainability. I think we'll see a shift toward creating more welcoming and environmentally conscious experiences for travelers, aligning with the evolving values and preferences of guests worldwide.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

Being recognised as a Woman to Watch is an incredible honor and privilege. It signifies not only personal achievement but also the broader recognition of women's contributions in an industry where we've historically been underrepresented in leadership positions.

It also represents a platform to inspire change and advocate for and foster greater inclusivity and diversity, and gender equality within the hospitality sector. It's about breaking barriers, shattering stereotypes, and leading with passion and purpose.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Role models have played a pivotal role in shaping my life and career. They have provided inspiration, guidance, and a blueprint for success. Their journeys

have shown me what's possible, motivating me to push boundaries, strive for excellence, and become a mentor myself to pay it forward.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The most valuable lesson I've learned in my career is that genuine success lies in building strong relationships and fostering collaboration. It's about connecting with people, understanding their needs, and working together to achieve common goals. These relationships have been the cornerstone of my journey in hospitality and beyond.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success, to me, means achieving a harmonious balance between professional accomplishment, personal fulfillment, and making a positive impact on the lives of others through meaningful contributions.



Laura Brander

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



I'm Vice President, Communications at Virgin Atlantic, responsible for corporate comms, brand PR, events, internal communications and people engagement, thought leadership, issue management and crisis response for the airline, holiday and cargo business.

I led the communications response to the pandemic and transformation of the airline. This included cross-industry lobbying for the sector, and ensuring a path to recovery by re-opening the skies.

I've masterminded inaugural route launches to Tel Aviv, Austin and Tampa with Sir Richard Branson; product launches of the airline's state of the art A350 and A330neo aircraft; and high-profile DE&I initiatives, including the world's first Pride Flight and agenda-setting tattoo, makeup and gender-neutral uniform policy campaigns. In November, I was privileged to work on Flight100, the world's first transatlantic flight on 100% sustainable aviation fuel.

Before joining Virgin Atlantic, I spent 15 years heading up communications in leading UK newsrooms, spanning BBC News, BBC World Service and ITV News at ITN. There, I relaunched ITV News at Ten, and promoted powerful investigative journalism such as the Jimmy Savile scandal.

I studied at the University of Edinburgh, I live in London and I'm a proud board member of the Women of the Year Awards.



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Who is your role model?

Claire Topping, CMO at Chelsea Football Club. Evidence it's possible to be badass at your job, kind, and damn good fun too.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Without hesitation, Joan Collins.

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

A Mirror, a thought provoking, multi layered play by Sam Holcroft, with Jonny Lee Miller as lead at The Trafalgar theatre.

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

Archaeology or journalism.



What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Huge. The role models in my life have championed me to progress, given me confidence when I needed a push and empowered me. They also inspire me to think about what kind of leader or role model I'd like to be.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Drive, ambition, energy, empathy and humour.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't waste time worrying about the things you think you can't do, just focus on your superpowers and that's what will set you apart.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Life balance makes you better at work.



Kirsty Burkill

Company **Merlin Entertainments** / Job Title **Vice President of Marketing**



Hello. I'm Kirsty!
I'm a dynamic turnaround executive with a proven track record spanning three continents. My passion lies in unravelling complex business puzzles and catalysing the next wave of growth. As a perpetual learner and female leader,

my mission and purpose is to build and grow exceptional businesses which drive both long-term shareholder value and are playgrounds for "rough diamonds" to thrive. I love bridging cultures and building strong, diverse teams. I'm fascinated by the concept of "distance travelled", focusing on leadership's role in paving the way for individuals to realise their full potential.

My journey began at Walt Disney World, which ignited my passion for hospitality before venturing into digital marketing agency life, focused on retail and fashion sectors. However, the call of the purpose-driven, hospitality industry proved irresistible. Over the past decade with Merlin Entertainments, I've had the privilege of leading and living alongside teams in the UK, Germany, North America, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Korea, and Thailand. My fondest childhood memories are intertwined with attractions, making my role in this phenomenal Merlin team – a group dedicated to bringing joy, creating connections, and crafting unforgettable experiences worldwide – my greatest honour.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

The most impactful professional advice I've received came from the inspiring Emma Woods, who told me, "Ensure you're always engaged in work that fuels your passion and work for a leader who inspires you; everything else will fall into place." This wisdom has been my guiding light, influencing my career decisions and encouraging me to make bold choices. I've made it a point to pass this invaluable insight on to every mentee I've had the privilege to guide.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Throughout my life and career, I've been incredibly lucky to have exceptional role models who have generously invested their time and support in me. My foremost role model in life is my mum, whose strength, generosity, kindness, and zest for life serve as constant reminders to enjoy the ride. Professionally, I am particularly inspired by three remarkable women: Emma Woods, Fiona Eastwood, and Angela Jobson. Each of them extended their support,

QUICKFIRE

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

Two talks with two brilliant authors. Firstly, Will Guidara, author of *Unreasonable Hospitality*. Secondly, Lisa Sun, author of *Gravitas*.

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

I think I'd be in the gaming industry. It's an industry I love to watch from afar! I'm also a secret gamer at heart...

dedicating their time to nurture my development, and stood by me as either a cheerleader or a coach when I needed it most. I am beyond grateful to each of you, thank you.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would tell my younger self to embrace courage and be bold, especially when faced with self-doubt. That nagging voice telling you that you can't... challenge it with action. Action is the enemy of self-doubt. You will see me at my most passionate when I can support others to overcome these moments.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I treasure leaders who can be vulnerable, transparent and prioritise feedback. I see feedback not merely as a gift, but as an investment in both the professional working relationship and unlocking individual growth potential.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I am honoured. Over the years, this list has featured women who I greatly admire and who inspire me daily with their transformative impact on the hospitality industry. To see my name included in 2024 is a true privilege. Thank you WiHTL and MBS!



Gen Byrne

Company **Nando's** / Job Title **Regional Director**



I joined Nando's as a junior assistant manager in 2007, working in a number of restaurants across the West End and central London. I became a General Manager, then an Area Manager, and now look after a team of eight Area Managers and 80 restaurants. I also partner

with our deployment and labour modelling team from an Operations perspective.

What do you predict for the future of HTL?

I believe the challenges brought about by Brexit, Covid-19 and inflation are actually forcing our industry to get better. How do we make hospitality careers attractive for young talent? How do we develop leadership from within? And how do we find efficiency through calibre of teams, automation and other technology? I predict that innovative and adaptable businesses, who match a passion for people with a commitment to tech enabled systems, will be the rising stars for the rest of this decade.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

When I was a general manager opening a new site under challenging circumstances, my area

manager at the time helped me understand that making mistakes was actually going to make myself, my team, and my restaurant better in the long run. Understanding that perfection will always be out of reach, but never stopping to try and get there anyway was the balance that kept me sane!

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I'm very flattered and exceptionally proud to be included in this index. The recognition from my peers, my community and the wider industry is validating, reassuring and inspires me to push on and achieve more.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

In a leader I value integrity,

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I've been lucky enough to work with a number of exceptional leaders during my time with Nando's. My peers at a Regional Director level have been constructively challenging and supportive. I've grown my thought processes and leadership style through watching them operate and being part of our, frankly awesome, senior Operations team.

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

I subscribe to www.chartr.co, twice weekly email newsletters with data from around the world summed up in simple visual graphs or charts. A recent edition on the changing pay packages for hospitality workers in the USA was really interesting.

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

When I was growing up,

I wanted to be a teacher, but most people would probably say I should be a librarian. However, I truly love being an operational leader in hospitality. Every day is a new challenge – it's fast paced, vibrant and exciting. I love the fact I get to work with so many passionate and driven individuals and support them on their journeys to become industry leading restaurateurs

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Attracting a new generation to work in hospitality, and helping them understand that fantastic personal development, rewarding opportunities, and real careers can be found here.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Sir David Attenborough. I would love to hear about all the places he's been and things he has seen.

courage and passion. Every leader is individual and will be at their best when they are behaving in a truly authentic way. There are many ways to inspire, motivate and lead – and the style can be different, as long as you build trust, safety and connection with those around you. Hospitality leaders, especially in operational roles, have a huge responsibility to engage and influence large audiences. Through enthusiasm, energy and

excellent storytelling, they can impart a vision and bring it to life.

“ I believe the challenges brought about by Brexit, Covid-19 and inflation are actually forcing our industry to get better.



Juliett Cattermole

Company David Lloyd Clubs / Job Title Group People Director



I love differences, from learning about different cultures to understanding different personalities. From a young age, I knew my calling was to help, support and guide people. I am naturally curious, so starting my career as a cabin crew travelling

the world for British Airways fed my need to understand those differences. After completing the British Airways management and leadership program, I soon fell into HR, giving me access to many different departments. I have been in HR now for over 25 years with companies such as Mitchells and Butlers, Papa John's International and most recently, Group People Director for David Lloyd Clubs, where I have the responsibility of leading the UK and European People function, focusing on strategies to attract, engage, and retain top talent.

I have a BA Hons in Leadership and Business Management from Exeter University and an MSC from an American university (Purdue University), all of which were gained through apprenticeship programmes, which I advocate for. Everyone should have the chance to learn and grow, regardless of socioeconomic background.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Throughout my journey, role models have been vital in shaping who I am—my goals, how I see the world, and how I act. They've shown me what success means in various ways, inspiring me to go after what I believe in with tenacity and drive.

“ If you feel it, say it.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I'd boil it down to five key traits: First off, integrity because it makes a leader someone you can trust.

Then there's vision – being able to look ahead, dream big, and steer us all in the right direction. Communication is huge, too; you have to get your ideas across clearly and be a great listener, tuning into what others have to say. Empathy is a game-changer: feeling what others feel, understanding where they're coming from, and not forgetting humility – Recognising that you stand equal to others while being open to new insights and suggestions. Humble leaders are the kind you want to follow; they make teamwork shine.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Recognising women leaders in these industries

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Rob Pitcher, CEO of Revolution Bars Group. For his development of individuals to be the best version of themselves.

What is the most exciting thing you've read, watched or heard recently?

I have just finished reading "Why I no longer talk to white people about Race" by Reni Eddo-Lodge. Reni talks about the need to see things from others'

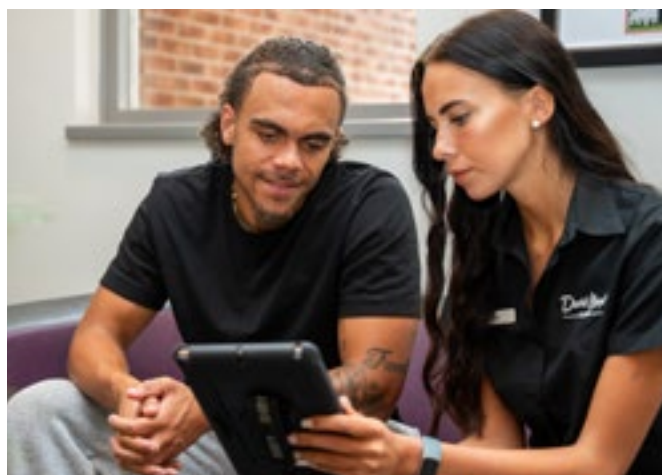
viewpoints and really listen to others' experiences.

What would you be doing if you weren't working in HTL?

As I was a figure skater from a young age through to my teens, I would have to say teaching children to skate.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

It has to be my Dad, who died when I was 27.



helps to break down gender stereotypes and promote a culture of inclusivity. By showcasing the achievements of women, it challenges the traditionally male-dominated narrative and encourages more women to aspire to leadership roles.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

"If you feel it, say it" is

a phrase that, for me, encourages open and honest communication. Whenever I have a certain emotion or thought, especially one that is significant to me, I will express it rather than keep it to myself. Sharing your feelings can lead to better mutual understanding, resolve potential misunderstandings, and strengthen relationships. It's also a way of being true to oneself and honouring one's own emotions.

Sabrina de Carvalho

Company **Merlin Entertainments** / Job Title **Senior Divisional Director**



I am Senior Divisional Director for Gardaland Resort. Gardaland is Italy's largest theme park, encompassing three themed hotels, 475 rooms, a selfie centre, and a legoland waterpark. Gardaland Resort is part of Merlin Entertainments, which is Europe's largest

entertainment company. Before joining Merlin, I held the position of Managing Director for a marketing organisation representing a historic city in the Baltics. Additionally, I have experience in the musical industry, where I was responsible for the branding of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical CATS in Hamburg.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mother and my grandmother – both very independent and successful women ahead of their time.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The continued advancements in artificial intelligence, automation, and data analytics will bring transformative changes in how our businesses operate and deliver services.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Mileva Marić, Albert Einstein's first wife. Marić was a physicist herself and contributed to scientific discussions with Einstein during their time together. I would love to hear from her how she was able to pursue her scholastic ambitions in a time that didn't value girls' education. Or just Brad Pitt!

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL industry mean to you?

Being recognised as a Woman to Watch is an honour that holds significant meaning for me. For me, it means embracing the responsibility to be a role model and mentor, advocating for diversity and inclusion, and fostering an environment where everyone, regardless of gender, can flourish. I want to continue positively, championing innovation, and being part of the necessary transformative journey within our industry.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

I think it is important to showcase successful women leaders, to provide inspiration for the next generation of women entering these industries.

I also think that highlighting women leaders creates networking opportunities and mentorship possibilities. It allows aspiring professionals to connect with successful women who can offer guidance, share experiences, and provide support in navigating their careers.

Lastly, emphasising the achievements of women leaders enhances the overall reputation of the HTL industry. It communicates to the broader community that this sector is progressive, forward-thinking, and committed to promoting diversity and equality.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

The best professional advice I've ever received is to "embrace change and view challenges as opportunities for growth." This advice has been a guiding principle throughout my career, encouraging me to approach obstacles with a positive mindset and an openness to adapt. It has taught me that change is inevitable in any professional journey, and rather than resisting it, I should leverage it as a chance to learn, innovate, and enhance my perspective.

This advice has influenced how I deal with transitions. By embracing change, I've been able to stay agile, to continuously evolve, and to seize new opportunities that have arisen. It has empowered me to view challenges not as roadblocks, but as stepping-stones toward personal and professional development.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

One of my primary goals is to empower those around me, fostering an environment where team members feel supported, motivated, and capable of achieving their highest potential. I want to be remembered as a leader who invests in the growth and success of others.



Fran Collison

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



I've been in the hospitality industry for 35 fabulous years, starting my career as a chef in both military and civilian roles before becoming a Chef Lecturer in the UK and subsequently several years in the Sultanate of Oman. I always had a keen passion for food

safety and moved full time into the world of safety and food safety in the hospitality industry after completing a MSc at 38. In 2011 I moved back to the UK and joined Aramark. I've just celebrated my 13th year, and I am still passionate about the organisation and the industry itself. Being in a safety role can be challenging but it is all about protecting our tremendous front-line teams, our clients, and our customers. 95% of my role is building and keeping relationships on which I thrive and I'm also very proud to be an active committee member for Aramark Pride.



QUICKFIRE

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Boy George – I have been a lifelong fan.

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

The Sky documentary *Forced Out*. A painful reminder of my time in HM Forces when it was illegal

to be gay. A must watch for anyone who believes in I&D!

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

I would most likely be writing my memoirs, I have always enjoyed writing and I think my 35 years in the industry may be an interesting read! That and finally learn to play the drums!

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I am absolutely delighted and truly honoured to be included in the Woman to Watch Index. Women play a huge role in the success of the HTL sector, but are not always recognised for their skills, knowledge and commitment to the industry.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be yourself and trust yourself. In my early career it was much harder being a woman in the workplace, particularly in kitchens.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

A great communicator, honesty, integrity, and someone who genuinely

believes people should be their whole selves at work.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Come and join this fantastic industry, if you do make the leap, be brave, work hard and ask questions. You will make lifelong friends and have many stories to tell. It is a fantastic vocation.



In my early career it was much harder being a woman in the workplace, particularly in kitchens.



Kerry Curtis

Company **Total Fitness** / Job Title **Brand Development Director**



A career in the hospitality, travel and leisure industry is incredibly rewarding. I love working in an industry that genuinely enriches lives. After graduation I progressed in marketing roles across hotel and aviation brands including Radisson Hotel Group (UK,

Ireland, and Western Europe) and Manchester Airports Group, working with airlines including Etihad, Qatar and American Airlines. As a creative marketer, I certainly had lots of amazing products to work with. I made a change after ten amazing years and stepped into the fitness sector in 2018. Fitness, just like travel, enables people to embrace possibility, step into new and sometimes uncomfortable situations and do things you never knew or even thought you could do! I'm a big advocate of customer centricity, putting them at the heart of decision making. The path to doing this is always insight, my natural curiosity has led to some fascinating research projects in my current role as Brand Development Director. I'm really proud to work in a business that puts people first – our team members and our customers.



What does 'success' mean to you?

I have realised this definition is always changing and never complete, we're all on a journey and things don't always go as planned. But for today, I know I feel the most "successful" when I am growing personally and professionally, being courageous, doing great things with people that make my life varied and above all else enjoyable.

well paid, or the most glamorous, but it is truly worth it. Great things happen to great people, but you do have to take chances and "find your fit". For me that fit has been the right people and an aligned brand purpose.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Humility, compassion, integrity, and resilience.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I am very grateful to be a part of such an incredible group of women. I'm honoured to be recognised as a Woman to Watch, and I'm really excited about the future. We've got some incredible things coming at Total Fitness with some more career-defining moments for me, I am sure. Looking further ahead I hope to continue an enjoyable and rewarding career with inspiring teams and brands.

QUICKFIRE

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

I enjoy Steven Bartlett's podcast *Diary of a CEO*. I have listened to a recent episode with Arthur C. Brooks, the No.1 Happiness Expert, about five times!

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

Maybe living off grid, and being featured on Ben Fogle's *New Lives in the Wild* – such a guilty pleasure! Other than that, in another life I may have joined the police force or the film/media industry.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Bob Marley.

“Great things happen to great people, but you do have to take chances and “find your fit”.”

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Do it! Know that it often isn't easy, the most

Emma Dagnes

Company **Alexandra Palace** / Job Title **Chief Executive Officer**



My career started working as a Temp PA during the day and cleaning tables in the evening in a night club. It was an excellent grounding for what it takes to work and thrive in HTL! Over the last 25 years I have worked across sport, entertainment and leisure

in both the private and public sector. Over the last 13 years, alongside the extraordinary team at "Ally Pally", we have driven the revival of an iconic site and organisation to now being an internationally recognised and beloved entertainment, cultural and heritage destination.

I am responsible for continuing to drive the visionary transformation of the Palace and surrounding park to secure its future for generations to come.

As an organisation we are obsessive about our people and their journey with us and strive every day to create an inclusive environment where staff are happy and proud to work and feel like they belong. We forge a culture that listens, recognises, and empowers its staff and lives by its values and behaviours. Thus supporting our staff to grow and develop to achieve their potential.

It is a privilege to serve such a great organisation which delivers its purpose "Of Enriching Lives Through Great Experiences, Forever" every day.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I have two role models – my parents. Their hard work and dedication to family is extraordinary and truly inspirational.

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

Fixing Britain with Louise Casey on BBC Radio 4.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Dolly Parton. Her song Working 9 to 5 inspired me to never have a 9 to 5 job. I have a lot to thank Dolly for in ensuring that I'm in a role and industry that I love and am truly passionate about. Thanking her over dinner would be perfect, and maybe she would throw in a dinner table rendition of the song!

What Impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Early in my career I sought support and guidance from people I admired. Along the way I've been fortunate to work for and with incredible leaders, coaches and mentors who continue to support me to this day. Their advice and guidance has led me to pursuing opportunities that I may not have had the confidence to do without them. I'm conscious of how they all gave their time to help me and I am now trying to pay forward by supporting other women who are at the start of their careers.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I've read the reports of previous years and always been in awe of the passion, commitment and determination in which these incredible women are driving forward EDI to ensure that HTL is truly accessible and welcoming to all.

To be considered as part of these agents of change is a career highlight.

What do you predict for the future of the HTL?

We live in an ever changing and complex world and predicting the future is certainly challenging. The sector has proved, particularly during the Pandemic that it is creative, resilient

and innovative even in the face of adversity. No doubt in the coming years there will be further heads winds, which will call on the resourcefulness of the sector once more.

In terms of trends, sustainability will shift from an expectation to a non-negotiable, and ethical practices from consumers will only rightly continue to grow and impact how business is undertaken and delivered.

AI will certainly challenge and push the sector to new and exciting frontiers. The challenge is how to harness the power of AI strategically and with positive intent.

And with the great work of WIHTL and all those who work in the sector collectively and collaboratively challenging the status quo, I am confident that the data will show continuing improvement in D&I in the coming 12 months and beyond.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Seek out those already in the sector and talk to them about their career journey. Don't ever be afraid to reach out even without an introduction, what's the worst that can happen... they say no, what is the best... they say yes and you get some phenomenal insights and you have expanded your network.

Kari Daniels

Company **SSP UK & Ireland** / Job Title **Chief Executive Officer**



SC Johnson, Wella and Superdrug. I'm a member of the WiHTL Advisory Board and the Chief Executives Forum at IGD. I also currently serve as a Non-Executive Director at Topps Tiles plc.

I joined SSP in January 2023, following 20 years at Tesco where I held the role of CEO of Tesco Ireland for four years, three years as UK Commercial Director and various other Marketing and Commercial roles in the UK and Europe. Prior to Tesco, I held leadership positions at

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your career?

It's changed massively. I've seen it go from nobody's job to everybody's job. We've moved through different approaches, from a narrow focus on quotas and targets to an understanding that the broad culture is really important, and that we have to tackle unconscious bias. There's clearly still lots to do, but I can see real progress in the fact that I'm mostly no longer the only woman in the room!

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I've certainly had role models, but I've never looked at one person and thought: I want to be like you. Role models have served me very well in terms of looking at how other people lead in different situations and how they navigate particular challenges. Interestingly, I'd say that learning from other people how not to do things is perhaps more important!

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

I've got two. First, early on in my career, a senior manager asked me: "are you sure your ladder's on the right wall?" It really shocked me because I thought he was suggesting I was not performing. But he meant something quite different. He thought I had potential to do more and was pushing me to stretch myself. I ended up being

promoted to commercial director.

Second, I'll never forget another excellent manager telling me to "leave the party when the beers are still cold." I thought that was such a bang-on piece of advice, about being brave enough to know when to move on from a role.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

There's so much opportunity! This sector is incredibly fast-paced, with huge scope for rapid change. Look at BrewDog and Black Sheep Coffee, brands in rapid growth that we hadn't heard of some years back, it's a very dynamic sector. The only thing I would say is that if you don't like people you should probably look somewhere else!

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I'd tell myself to be more confident about my ability, more vocal and more demanding.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I think for me it's empathy, collaboration and the ability to create an environment where colleagues can be their best selves, really feel they belong and as such do their best work. I look up to leaders who have a real team ethos, for whom it's not about one person delivering, but about everyone having a role to play.

QUICKFIRE

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

I'd be travelling. I love seeing the world and experiencing different cultures.

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

Mr Bates vs The Post Office.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Martha Lane Fox.



Rebecca Donaldson

Company **Whitbread** / Job Title **Commercial Marketing Director**



I am the Commercial Marketing Director at Whitbread for the restaurant division, a role I was appointed to shortly after joining Whitbread in 2019, leading a team of 60 people to deliver a cross-functional plan across the branded restaurant and Premier Inn hotel estate.

Prior to Whitbread I worked at Marks & Spencer leading a trading team across various multi-million-pound food categories. During my 20-year career at Marks and Spencer I developed my skills in data analysis, pricing, negotiation, consumer behaviour, developing and delivering strategies to drive business growth whilst running / managing ever-changing trading dynamics. In addition, working within M&S food really sparked my passion for food and drink, developing my understanding of food manufacturing, supply chain, product development and how to create market leading quality products.

Although my career is hugely important to me, so too is my family. I have a husband and a 6-year-old daughter, and I am committed to ensuring that I maintain a balance of work and family time. This is hugely important to me, and I encourage this with all members of my team.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Simon Jones, CEO of Away Resorts and former Managing Director of Premier Inn Hotels and Restaurants.

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

The incredible story of Dame Deborah James, a truly inspirational woman who raised awareness of bowel cancer through

social media, TV, radio, and her podcast "You, Me & The Big C", her openness and honesty has made a huge difference with more people being tested for the disease over the past three years.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Michelle Obama, the first African American First Lady of the United States. She is a true role model for women across the world.



What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

It is an honour, and hugely motivational. I feel respected and valued for the contribution I am making.

Sometimes you can lose perspective regarding your achievements and the difference you are making – you become absorbed in the day-to-day and don't take time to reflect and reset. For me this is a platform from which I can begin the next part of my career journey, from broadening my network to sharing my experiences and inspiring others.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

I was once told that the more senior you become in an organisation, the lonelier your leadership journey can become, your ability to confide in those around you reduces and you can often find yourself alone in decision making.

The follow-on advice I received was to surround yourself with a brilliant team who are experts in their field, that you trust implicitly to deliver their part of the strategy. It's also important to believe in yourself, have confidence in your decision making, be

decisive, and always remain true to yourself and the values you hold.

“ This is a platform from which I can begin the next part of my career journey.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

- 1) Those who can inspire and motivate a team, have driven change and results by making people think differently.
- 2) Those who have set out clear goals which everyone can understand and have empowered teams to confidently work towards achieving them.
- 3) Strong communicators who actively listen and care about their team's wellbeing have achieved the best results.

I have applied these principles when shaping my leadership footprint, recognising my strengths and my opportunities to develop. When I asked my team how they would best describe me, these are the words they came back with: inspiring, courageous, resilient, influential and tenacious.



Jo Eagling

Company Sodexo / Job Title Finance Director, Sodexo Health & Care



After graduating I joined a finance graduate scheme at British Steel, where I began to study for my professional qualification and worked in a number of finance functions. After four years I realised the heavy manufacturing industry wasn't for me and was keen

to join the travel industry in the French Alps, so that I could combine my love of snowboarding with my qualification. So I accepted a role as Head of Finance for the tour operator Skiworld. This was my first experience of working in the travel industry, and the pressure and excitement of delivering firsthand services to the public made me realise that I wanted to carve out a career in the services industry. After three years of working and playing hard in the snow, I moved back to the UK and accepted a finance manager role with Sodexo. I joined the business because of the broad services it delivers to many industries, and I knew that Sodexo's scale would provide many opportunities. Since joining 14 years ago I have performed six different roles in finance, commercial and business development, and mostly in Sodexo's healthcare business, where I know the services we deliver make a difference to people each day. Working in the industry has allowed me to progress to Director level.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Firstly, if opportunities arise, take them. Never sell yourself short and always believe in yourself. Secondly, learn to accept that sometimes things don't work out as planned, take the positives and develop and learn from the experience. Lastly, to build resilience. This is a key attribute in both your professional and personal life.

deliver exceptional service for their clients – and rarely are two days the same.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

It's important to highlight women leaders in our industry for many reasons. Studies have shown that companies with gender diversity in leadership see better financial performance compared to those less diverse, so it's essential that women perform leadership roles for the industry to thrive. Secondly, by highlighting women leaders it will encourage younger women to strive to be a leader, as having someone to look up to can encourage the next generation. Lastly, to make other women understand that being a leader doesn't mean sacrifices at home.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

To always push myself and have the confidence to apply for the role that gets me to the next level, even if I don't have all the relevant experience as this can be developed on the job.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My Mum! She is a strong and determined woman who always encourages me, instilling the belief that I can achieve anything if I put my mind to it.

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

I'd most definitely be a helicopter pilot, if I had my time again that would be my career of choice.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

How we can help our clients to achieve net zero,

I believe that corporate institutions are pivotal in making a difference in doing everything we can to combat climate change.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

The style icon and music star Grace Jones. She's an inspiring example of someone who in their career has pushed boundaries and challenged the norms, whilst achieving many successes. I think she would have some great stories to share over dinner!

“It's essential that women perform leadership roles for the industry to thrive.”

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

I'd say: "go for it". There is so much variety and opportunity across the industry. Skills can be developed and transferred across functions and it's an industry that embraces diversity. It's also full of passionate people wanting to make a difference and

Lucy Entwistle

Company iQ Student Accommodation / Job Title People Director



I started on a graduate scheme at BAE Systems and did two years chopping my way around aerospace. I stayed there for eight years, moving around different roles and functions, and absolutely loved it. I moved to the south of England and started my role at New

Look as HR business partner, looking after the central functions. It was totally my sweet-spot, and I then 'fell' into managing the central HR function including the systems and processes. I did that role for five years, then moved to the Gym Group, where I led a change program to completely change the employment model for personal trainers. This meant we recruited and onboarded circa 1,200 PTs in six months! Then, in January 2022, I stepped into the People Director role at iQ Student Accommodation.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mum. She was a single parent, she had three children, she worked full-time, and achieved her degree while working nights in the hospital. I got my strong work ethic from my mum.

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

Our CEO asked the senior leadership team

to read a book which had resonated with him called *The Founder's Mentality*. It was about us seeing the business as our own and making decisions with that in mind.

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

My younger self always wanted to work in a skyscraper in New York, although I don't know what I wanted to do in that skyscraper!

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would say that you can't know everything straight away, so don't give yourself such a hard time. However, make sure you really push yourself out of your comfort zone... You're never going to get everything right the first time and that's ok.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

The best professional advice is to understand which things are worth fighting for and fully 'going after' and which things are fine to let go. It's a skill I don't think I have quite honed yet but I am working on it.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Honesty, being clear and having a direct style. I admire leaders who let their team work independently, and give them avenues to explore and the ability to drive change. Integrity is also critical. And they've got to be a good coach, without letting the person know they're being coached!

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time working across both retail and the hospitality sectors?

It's evolved hugely. If I think back to my time at New Look, diversity and inclusion was a job for the talent acquisition team. I owned the HRIS, but I

“ The best professional advice is to understand which things are worth fighting for, and which things are fine to let go.

can't say I remember ever running D&I data to make decisions to form any insight. But fast-forward five years, and now I have a role in my team dedicated to it at iQ. D&I is one of our strategic imperatives, just like operational excellence – it's an actual driver of business and determines our success. We've got a leadership steering group, and a working group made of people from across the organisation.

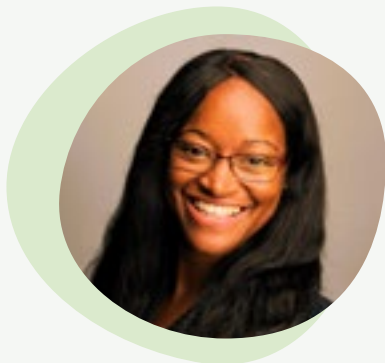
What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

It's a real responsibility, and a chance to share experiences and ensure others can look up and see the opportunities available to them. We've just introduced a women's networking group at iQ, and we're asking them to focus on what they want to know from the female leaders in the business. In the same way, being in this Index gives others a real view of the routes different women have taken, and the choices they've made which have shaped their career.



Dana Farmer

Company **Travel + Leisure Co.** / Job Title **VP, SEC Reporting & Corporate Accounting**



I began my career as an auditor at EY in New York. As an auditor, you learn a lot in a short period of time and learn the true meaning of hard work. I went to work for one of its audit clients, TimeWarner, Inc., as a senior accountant in the Consolidations

department. This role taught me the skill of mediation, as in every transaction someone was going to be unhappy with the amount on their financial statements. With a little diplomacy, I was able to get resolutions.

I relocated to Virginia for a Consolidations accounting role with AES Corporation. I met people from around the world and learned about the cultures and customs of the countries where we operated. There, I transitioned into SEC reporting, which I enjoyed. When I relocated to Florida and a SEC reporting opportunity became available at Travel + Leisure Co., I quickly applied. What really sold me on Travel + Leisure Co. was the female leader whom I interviewed with telling me that as a woman, I do not have to sacrifice family for success. Now as a VP, I can attest to the accuracy of that statement.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't be afraid to be yourself. Early in my professional career I was not sure how I should behave in a corporate setting. My parents did not work in corporate jobs, so they could not really guide me. I would

watch and mimic others whom I felt fit the mold of what "professional" looked and sounded like. That was draining. Once I gave up trying to fit that professional mold, I felt happier and more confident with the accomplishments I was able to achieve on my own merits.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mother is my role model. She has always been supportive, encouraging, and would sacrifice to keep my siblings and I happy and cared for. She was a mentor and a mom to all the kids in my neighborhood. She would always give Christmas gifts and Easter baskets to the neighborhood kids whose parents could not provide for them. She worked as a barber, which is a male-dominated field, but eventually became the most in-demand in her shop.

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

A quote from Theodore Roosevelt: "comparison is the thief of joy."

I saw this on a poster, and it caused me to take pause. It is such a true and accurate statement.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Michelle Obama. She is so down to earth yet eloquent and intelligent. I would love to just have a conversation with her and get advice from her as I feel it would be inspirational and transformative.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

My first female leader told me to always have a voice in meetings. She said if you were invited to the meeting, that means someone thought your insights and/or perspective would be valuable to the conversation. Even if you do not feel the same way, speak up so you can be invited again. I now appreciate the unspoken part of that advice, which is only through being in the meetings and having a constant seat at the table can you start to drive change.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Authenticity and compassion. It is fine to not know it all; I appreciate people who accept this fact and instead leverage their team in order to build and operate better together as a unit.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL? How can we overcome them?

I think a roadblock to inclusion is the fallacy that there are a limited numbers of spots for us at that top. Once we realise that we can all be at the top together, we can work better to lift one another up, rather than being in competition.



Lina Giavara

Company **Sportsbet** / Job Title **General Manager, Global Betting Platform**



After completing my university degrees, I started my career at one of the top four banks in Australia, CommBank. It was here that I found my passion for technology and leadership. I've since worked in a range of industries spanning banking and

finance, mining, telco, airlines and digital, and through a combination of local and global experiences, have been enriched with a range of diverse and rewarding career opportunities.

For the last nine years I have been with Sportsbet (Flutter Group), the online wagering leader in Australia. I'm immensely proud to be part of a team, where our values are very real and tangible, where the customer is at the centre of every decision we make, and where we actively nurture a culture of diversity and inclusion. It's also a privilege to work in a global organisation, where I have the opportunity to use my leadership platform to advocate globally for gender diversity.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Jacinda Ardern is someone I admire. Not specifically for being the former NZ Prime Minister, but as one of the youngest female leaders globally, she led her country through natural disasters, terrorism and the pandemic, leading from the front, being decisive, and always authentic and empathetic. Also, for having the courage to know when to step down and prioritise her young family over her career.

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

I recently binge-watched the *Thai Cave Rescue*. It is a very powerful reminder of how resilient we can be despite extreme setbacks and adversity. And the how the power of diverse skills, experiences and leadership, united by a common goal, can solve seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

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

Travelling! I'm intrigued and love to learn about different cultures, languages and history. And of course, exploring new foods and wines!

How have you seen or felt the conversations around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

While our job is never done, I'm particularly proud of the progress we've made within Sportsbet, and more broadly in Flutter. Diversity is front and centre in our strategies, in our values, in the way we come together in moments that matter, and in our language and symbols. We actively measure D&I indicators and sentiment, and use this to guide where we need to shift the dial further particularly in the areas of gender, multiculturalism, accessibility and LGBTQIA+.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be bold and back yourself! Don't be afraid of what you don't know now, instead, be energised and excited about the opportunity to learn something new with each adventure. When a new learning experience or opportunity presents itself, take ten seconds to be bold, and say YES!

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

It's not written down anywhere, but most of us grow up with an expectation that as a leader, you need

to have all the answers. I've come to appreciate over time as I've navigated various leadership roles, the importance of humility and vulnerability. Being an effective and authentic leader requires an openness and willingness to listen, being comfortable with not having all the answers and cultivating talent that will work with you to co-create the solutions.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Relatively early in my career, I was involved in leading a large transformation which involved significant career changes for many colleagues in the team. As a leader, I found it one of the most challenging and confronting times in my career, and through this experience I truly learnt the meaning of empowerment. I came to appreciate that in this context, the most powerful role I had as a leader, was not to solve for individual career outcomes, but instead, equip individuals with the information, tools and mindset so they were informed and empowered to make the best choices for themselves. I had to get them into the driver's seat and equip them to take the wheel and choose their adventure!



Helen Hayes

Company Bourne Leisure / Job Title General Counsel



I joined Bourne Leisure as General Counsel in August 2022. Working as a General Counsel is a great privilege, acting as a trusted advisor to the Boards of our two brands, Haven and Warner Leisure Hotels. The legal, compliance, data and health and safety team

are all part of the broader 'legal' function at Bourne. Prior to joining Bourne I spent seven years at Uber overseeing the legal team in 14 countries as the Legal Director for Northern & Eastern Europe. I originally trained as a lawyer at DLA Piper, where I worked as a litigator for 12 years. I wish I'd moved 'in-house' earlier – it is so much more rewarding to be submerged in the business and I learnt more in my first year in-house than I would have in five years in a law firm!

QUICKFIRE

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

Mr Bates vs The Post Office on ITV. I have long been familiar with the Post Office scandal as it has been reported quite extensively in legal press. But it's been fascinating to see how much impact the TV dramatisation has had.

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

When I was (a lot) younger I wanted to be a scuba diving instructor in the Caribbean – so still

working in the travel and leisure sector but in a very different role!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

So many people re-discovered the UK during the pandemic. As the world, our climate and global travel becomes more uncertain the opportunity for the UK holiday market is immense.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Tom Kerridge – to do the cooking so I could enjoy it!

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

We've come a long way across all sectors in having more female leaders, but there is still disparity. I've seen huge strides forward

during my career, where I've often been the only female leader around the table, but there's still a clear gender imbalance. I'm delighted that WiHTL and MBS are including my role in this index as it shows that

female leaders come from all sorts of backgrounds and there are many routes to leadership positions.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

My grandmothers were inspirational to me as a young woman. They achieved amazing things as women of their generation – they were courageous and broke the mold. One eloped to marry my grandfather and became the first female councillor in her city, the other travelled to West Africa to nurse there at just 24. Their achievements and their wise counsel meant that I grew up believing I could achieve whatever I chose to.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

I was given the book *Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader* at a key time in my own leadership journey. At the time I was definitely suffering from a bit of imposter syndrome, this book really resonated. It encouraged me to look for small but impactful ways to make a difference.

“ Keep an open mind, absorb the best from those around you, and always be willing to step out of your comfort zone.

What does 'success' mean to you?

It's 100% about a sense of personal accomplishment. Whether that's a great result at work, a new personal best at running, or hosting friends for dinner, to me it's feeling good about what you have achieved or helped others to achieve.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Integrity, resilience and humility.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

You are good enough. Keep an open mind, absorb the best from those around you, and always be willing to step out of your comfort zone.



Michelle Heywood

Company **easyJet Holidays** / Job Title **Finance Director**



Travel is the passion which drew me to this industry over 20 years ago, and I've never looked back! I'm currently Finance Director at easyJet holidays and was a founding member of the business. As the UK's fastest growing tour operator, it's an incredibly

exciting company to be a part of. I'm proud to sit on the management board and play a role in delivering our long-term strategy. I'm really passionate about diversity in leadership and people development, particularly in empowering women to unlock and realise their own potential. Prior to joining easyJet Holidays, I led the operations finance function at easyJet airline for seven years. I started my career at Centrica before moving into the world of travel, having held positions at First Choice and TUI. It's a fantastic and rewarding industry to be part of, with challenges but huge opportunities which mean no two days are ever the same.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I've been truly inspired by the women who have been named as a Woman to Watch over the past few years, and fortunate enough to have been personally supported in my career by some of those who have been recognised, so to be included myself alongside so many inspiring women is a huge honour. While women represent over half of travel roles worldwide, there's much lower representation at management level, and lower still is the number of women in finance leadership roles. Greater female representation in management of our industry, and in finance, is vital, so playing a part in showcasing female leadership is a real privilege for me.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I've been really fortunate to work for a number of truly stand out female and male leaders throughout my career who have displayed qualities which have helped shape my own approach to leadership. Humility is key and allows for a leader to listen to different perspectives, making space for those around them to shine. It's important to be vulnerable too, acknowledging that you need input from subject matter experts around you – because brilliant leaders are only as good as the people around them. And of course, passion and fearlessness, especially when launching a new business, is vital in motivating teams and instilling shared goals.

QUICKFIRE

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

easyJet holidays continuing to shake up the package holidays sector. It's been a rollercoaster ride so far with the challenges of the pandemic and growing at a record rate, but I really believe the best is yet to come.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

I know it's not the usual answer to this type of question but for me it would be Dave Grohl from the Foo Fighters. He's incredibly talented, has

overcome losing two of his closest friends in very tragic circumstances, does brilliant work with charities to support homelessness and has created one of the biggest – and best – rock bands in the world! He's known as one of the nicest guys in the industry, is incredibly creative and experimental, and treats performing to global leaders with as much importance as meeting and getting to know his fans. He would be a fantastic dinner guest to talk to about his experiences and could even finish off with one of my favourite songs!

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Do it! It's, at times, a volatile industry and it has an ever-changing landscape but with that comes innovation, growth and loads of learning opportunities. I've worked in travel for over 20 years now and I'm still learning something new every day. It's perfect for someone who has a growth mindset, enjoys challenges, and wants to

“ I've worked in travel for over 20 years now and I'm still learning something new every day.

push the boundaries of possibility. It's incredibly rewarding professionally and broadens horizons by offering you the opportunity to travel the world. Not many industries can offer that!



Sigríð Holmberg

Company ODEON Cinemas Group / Job Title IT Director, Northern Europe



After four years studying at business school, I started my career as a management consultant at Bain & Company in Stockholm before moving on to spend a few years working in a small non-profit consultancy, supporting social entrepreneurs

to build scalable businesses. I'm still engaged as a board member in one of these businesses, a Swedish organization that offers meaningful spare time activities for children and youth, regardless of disabilities which I thoroughly enjoy.

In 2017, I joined my current company which at that time was Nordic Cinema Group (NCG) as a Project Management Officer, with the task to coordinate and drive the business plan across Sweden, Norway, Finland & the Baltics. A few days after I joined, NCG was acquired by AMC Theatres, and merged with Odeon Cinemas Group (OCG). In 2019, I moved into the role as Operations Director for Southern Europe at OCG, responsible for the operations of more than 100 cinemas in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Germany, which was highly challenging but with high reward. A few years later, I moved back to Northern Europe as Business Partnering Director before taking on the IT Director role in territory early this year.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Dare to make decisions. They might not always be the right ones, but you need to make decisions to move forwards.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Stop constantly striving for perfection and allow yourself to pause and spend more time on activities outside of work/school. As a child, it was always important for me to perform in school and work hard, and when I started working, this mindset followed into my work life as well. My first job after studying

was a management consultant role, where attention to detail and striving for perfection were very important and this strengthened my performance-focused mindset. In hindsight, I wish I had been more relaxed and put less pressure on myself.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

The characteristics I value most in a leader is being genuine, honest, humble and a good listener. Working with a leader with these skills creates mutual trust which, for me, is necessary to perform at my best and to feel empowered in my role.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

In my career to date, I've learnt that managing the expectations of your key stakeholders is just as important as delivering the end results. This is particularly important when working in a cross-functional context, where the success of your own agenda is dependent on the collaboration with and delivery of other teams.

“Dare to make decisions. They might not always be the right ones, but without making decisions, you cannot move forward.”

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

All my female friends and colleagues who are combining a successful career with a busy family life are role models to me. Before having children, I didn't think of this as a big achievement but now, with a 2 and 4 year-old, I'm highly impressed by all women who balance motherhood with work. They are true role models not only for me but also for their children and future generations.

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

How AI can simplify and improve the way we work in nearly any field. Personally, I'm keen to start testing how Chat GPT agents can simplify my work on a daily basis.

If you weren't working in HTL/Retail, what would you be doing?

I love being outdoors, close to nature, so if I wasn't working in this sector, I would like to do something where I was able to spend time outdoors. I'm currently trying to learn more about gardening, and if I had the skills, my dream job would be a gardener.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

How our offering to cinema guests will evolve in terms of the digital and in-cinema experience as well as the content on screen.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

My late great aunt that never got to meet my kids.

Katie Horner

Company **Fuller, Smith and Turner** / Job Title **Group Financial Controller**



I graduated in Law at Nottingham University in 2007 and joined the PwC graduate programme in London to carve out a career in Finance. Nine years at PwC was an incredible learning and growing experience that gave me the opportunity to become Group Financial

Controller in logistics and manage an integration with UPS. My passion for hospitality and retail led me to Fuller's in 2018 as Group Financial Controller and immediately jump into the historical and significant sale of the Brewery. It is an exciting business to support financially, especially over the last couple of years, overcoming the highly challenging Covid period in hospitality and retail. It's been a real joy helping Fuller's rebuild stronger coming out of that period.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Always trust your gut feeling. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't so don't be afraid to speak up! And say yes to opportunities even if there's a degree of fear or lack of confidence, it's the best way to grow, learn and be better.

vision to bring people on the journey so they know where they're heading and how they can play a part, and enabling them to be successful.

“ We need inclusion at the core of decisions, ideas, innovations, problem solving and the growth of the industry.

QUICKFIRE

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

Mike Tyson's autobiography, *Iron Ambition*.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Mary McAleese.

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

I now cannot imagine working in any other industry, but it would probably be something fitness or sports related.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

EDI is now firmly on the agenda for most businesses, which is a real step forward. Fuller's has a clear diversity and inclusion policy, and it makes sure that all levels are provided with training. It is a real priority. At Fuller's we actively encourage people to be 'true to you'. There is still a way to go but I feel that real progress has been made which gives hope that we are getting closer to I&D being an everyday norm for us all.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Women leaders bring a different perspective, and it is important to have people at the table who think and act differently to question and challenge what has always considered to be the norm.

Half the adult population are women, so we need that voice, perspective and inclusion at the core of decisions, ideas, innovation, problem-solving and growth of the industry to influence and shape the experience for customers, employees and external partners.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Integrity in all you do and say, being open and empowering the team, listening more than talking to hear a breadth of views and ideas, giving a clear



Rachel Iley

Company **British Airways** / Job Title **Director of Global Learning Academy and Health Services**



From the moment I started my role in British Airways Reservations I was fascinated and inspired by the human stories made possible by aviation travel and that remains true thirty years later. I have enjoyed a fantastically varied and rewarding career with

British Airways working with amazing people – both customers and colleagues. I have held many diverse roles, perhaps too many to mention but have included Asset Protection, Procurement, HR, Cabin Crew Leadership, Customer Experience Transformation, Industrial Relations, and Operational Training.

At British Airways, we believe that every colleague matters, and in my current role as Director of our Global Learning Academy and Health Services, my team and I have the privilege of making sure that every colleague can realise their full potential by providing everyone with exceptional learning and development opportunities, and health and wellbeing support.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Malala Yousafzai. Her courage, bravery, tenacity, and commitment to education is astounding. She is a reminder that one voice at a time can change the world.

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

The Menopause Manifesto, by Dr Jen Gunter. I am interested to learn as much as I can about the menopause, so I understand my own journey but also how it affects others too, including our colleagues and customers.

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

I honestly can't imagine working in another sector as I am still as passionate today as when I started all those years ago but if I wasn't I would be working in another operational people-based industry.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

The actor Keanu Reeves. He appears to be very true to himself despite the industry he works in, which strikes me as remarkable. He said "The simple act of paying attention will take you a long way," which is great advice. Also my husband is possibly his number one fan so he would be thrilled!

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

Aviation has changed enormously over the time I have been working with British Airways, but I feel that the pace of change is now quicker and more focused. Roles that have historically followed traditional gender lines like pilots, engineers, and operational colleagues or cabin crew and customer services are becoming more diverse, and the conversation is also much more nuanced. EDI is no longer seen as simply about gender or ethnicity for example but also sexual orientation, socio-economic background, neurodiversity, gender identity and intersectionality. But perhaps the biggest and most welcome cultural change is that EDI is now seen as everyone's responsibility not just an HR activity. It is about creating an inclusive colleague experience and a customer experience where everyone is welcomed and valued.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Ironically, it was advice from my mum. She was always a passionate believer that education and learning leads to greater opportunities and choices for women. Every day at work I see the power of learning and development and how it changes people's lives.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

That being myself is more than enough. Early in my career I expended a lot of effort trying to fit in with some stereotype of what I should be like at work. I worked out over the years, with some help from some very supportive managers, that what people valued in me were the very things that made me different from others. What a relief! As soon as I started focusing on my strengths rather than my self-perceived limitations, I got out of my own way and my performance and happiness soared.

“ EDI is now seen as everyone's responsibility not just an HR activity.”

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I would love to be remembered as someone who made a real difference in creating a work and learning environment where all our colleagues can not only be themselves but also feel valued, understood, and supported.

Julie Jolly

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



My career started out in travel and tourism, joining a local travel agency as YTS Junior Travel Consultant – giving my age away there! Through this role I developed a love of travel and people. I worked for all the major travel agents of the day and

became a Lunn Poly shop manager. A stint working with Virgin Atlantic as cabin crew followed, which I also loved. However, keen to get my feet back on the ground to progress my career, I moved into business travel working as a team leader at an American Express Business Travel office. This role ended when American Express moved their business travel service into a telesales centre in Milton Keynes, and so after speculatively approaching Greene King I landed a role as a Marketing Administrator. I've been with Greene King now for 24 years, during this time I've been supported with formal and informal development. It's enabled me to achieve a CIM Diploma in Marketing, and a Post Graduate Degree in Multi-Unit Leadership with Distinction. I've undertaken several roles which have all led me to the role I hold today, which is broader than the title suggests. As part of Greene King's tenanted, leased and franchised division, I'm responsible for the recruitment of our tenants and franchisees, their training and our communication, alongside ensuring we are compliant with the Pubs Code legislation.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

We need to inspire our next generations. Publications such as this help to raise awareness of the different career opportunities and possibilities that are available to women in our sector, which are wide and varied. It's vitally important that women see this.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

It has dramatically evolved during my career. Early on

the words "inclusion" and "diversity" simply did not exist in the conversation. However, I'm proud to work for a company who has championed inclusion and diversity in our sector. Greene King has amplified and accelerated the conversation through action. Our Everyday Inclusion Mission is vital to this.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't be afraid to use your voice as your opinion matters. When thinking about this, I wished I'd had

QUICKFIRE

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

I recently watched the *Zuckerberg: King of the Metaverse* documentary. Definitely makes you think about the use of the internet and social media platforms.

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

Doing something that would enable me to earn enough money to fund my love of travel. I've often

dreamed about having my own travel consultancy.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Barbra Streisand. I'd love to talk to her about her career, how she's stayed true to herself and overcome the challenges of being a woman in her profession. I'd also ask her to sing a song or two.

Who is your role model?

People like Mary Portas, Sheryl Sandberg and Michelle Obama are all women I look to.

access to a book called *Fierce Conversations*, by Susan Scott, when I was younger. I'd also say don't be afraid to make mistakes, as long as you learn from them, and don't take yourself too seriously.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success means different things to different people, but for me it's about feeling like I've achieved something. Setting a goal for work or something more personal and achieving it, however big or small. It's also important to find the things that help you feel fulfilled and content.

When thinking about my family, success for me is also about seeing my son happy and engaged in the world. He's seen what I've achieved through hard

work and dedication and having him recognise this fills my heart with pride.

“ Don't be afraid to make mistakes, as long as you learn from them, and don't take yourself too seriously.”

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Don't dismiss it. There are many opportunities to create your own career pathway in this sector. You'll also build lifelong friendships.

Tina Koehler

Company Deliveroo / Job Title VP Global Consumer / Marketing



I have had the privilege of working in some of the most renowned consumer centric companies in the world: I started my career in FMCG, growing up as a brand and business leader at Procter & Gamble, working in different product categories and in

both global and local roles for 12 years. I then moved on to Amazon, where I led marketing and key tentpole events such as Prime Day and Black Friday for the UK, as well as consumer lifecycle thinking for Europe. As the Marketing Director of Audi I was part of the digital transformation in the automotive sector. My love of great food and amazing restaurants finally brought me to the HTL sector and Deliveroo, where I am leading the global marketing organisation, with a mission to transform how our customers eat and shop. I enjoy the pace of HTL and I love being surrounded by people who are passionate about delivering amazing food to our customers when they need or want it. As a side benefit, I am always in the know about the best restaurants in my area, too!

QUICKFIRE

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

I've been listening to the *Humans of Martech* podcast. They had a few interesting episodes about AI.

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

I would be running a boutique hotel catered to tired parents, with all the

trimmings like a great spa. Being a hotel manager was actually my childhood dream!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I am excited about customers being able to access their favourite food through so many different distribution channels.

Who is your role model?

Ingvar Kamprad, the founder of IKEA.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I have been lucky to work for some great leaders, and have found that the best ones have a high level

of emotional intelligence, and thus they are able to empathise with their employees and customers alike. In addition, a combination of being humble and massively



curious is a great pathway to getting to the bottom of things. It allows leaders to find solutions when there is a challenge, as well as identifying new opportunities for their customers and business.

“ It is essential to dedicate time to developing self-awareness about your strengths and weaknesses.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

There is a quote that I always come back to, especially if I'm at a crossroads or feeling a bit nervous about something. "There is freedom waiting for you, on the breezes of the sky, and you ask, 'What if I fall?' Oh but my darling, what if you fly?" (Eric Hanson). Whenever I have dared to reach out of my comfort zone, into something that I was passionate about and interested in, I have been rewarded by learning something new and developing as a person and a leader. In most cases, there isn't that much risk in trying... so go for it!

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL? How can we overcome them?

As in other sectors, the main roadblocks continue to be unconscious bias, as well as gender stereotypes. As leaders it is our responsibility to be very aware of and point out any potential bias, for example when it comes to performance discussions, talent reviews and hiring decisions. We should foster a culture where diversity is celebrated and inclusion is rewarded, and put structures in place that allow everyone equal access to training and growth opportunities.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

That it is essential to dedicate time to developing self-awareness about your strengths and weaknesses, and how you come across as a leader. You should also be conscious about your inner critic – the voice inside your head that impacts your decision making. Don't wait until you're at a senior level to do this. Put some time aside for these reflections early on, and get yourself a coach if you think this will help you on the journey.

Deborah Lee

Company **Compass Group** / Job Title **Group Chief People Officer**



I joined Compass as Group Engagement Director in August 2019 and became the Group Chief People Officer in September 2021. Initially attracted by the strategic focus on performance, people and purpose and bringing Compass' commitments to the lives

of our c600,000 colleagues every day, I am enthused about our ambition to create lifetime careers and be representative of the communities we serve.

Before Compass, I was CPO at Yoox Net-A-Porter, leading a globally diverse team to leverage the energy and talents of the predominantly female millennial workforce and integrating the business into the Richemont Group's portfolio.

At BT, I held the roles of CHRO for global services, chief learning officer, and HR Director for BT Retail. I led the global performance policy; built their Academy, the flagship leadership training and digital learning portal for c97,000 people; launched the Tech Literacy campaign to 400,000 children via 15,000 teachers; led the initial people and cultural integration stream for the £12.5bn acquisition of EE; and was part of the executive team to acquire Tikit and launch BT Sport in 2013 to air from the site of London's Olympic Park.

Originally a chemistry graduate from Imperial College London, I hold a master's in HR management from the University of Westminster, and an executive master's in HR leadership from SDA Bocconi and Rutgers University.

My most important role is being mother to two daughters and my greatest pleasure is attempting to better my equestrian dressage skills.



What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Doing a good job is not enough. You need to engage people on the journey of what it takes to be good – if you make it seem easy, people will always assume that it was.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

People that sparkle and shine a light on other people. I always notice the leaders that give credit away and push their people to the front.

What do you predict for the future of HTL?

Talent is the key! We remain in a war for talent. Creating the best opportunities and environment will win and

Understanding how to marry the ambitions and values of the individual with the aspirations and needs of the business is the driving force of success.

retain the best talent. Understanding how to marry the ambitions and values of the individual with the aspirations and needs of the business is the driving force for success. We need to be creative in how we think about hospitality and the role that we play in society.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

There are too many to mention, however I have a simple view which is that everyone you ever meet knows something you don't. Taking the time to find the light in others is what inspires me everyday.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Food services can positively impact the health of society, communities and the planet. I see endless opportunities for us to demonstrate a better way of being.

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

Mr Bates vs The Post Office – it's a reminder of how badly businesses can treat people when they lose focus on what truly matters: people.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Wonder Woman – because she stands for justice, peace and equality. I'd like to persuade her to lend me her Lasso of Truth to use on a few world leaders...

Christina Lewis

Company Deliveroo / Job Title Head Of Global Rider Experience & Partnerships



I studied English Literature at university and shortly after graduating I moved into the PR industry, taking various roles in the higher education sector after that. During our early years at Deliveroo, I held multiple roles leading rider experience at

Deliveroo both in the UK and Globally. On the surface these industries and roles seem quite different, but the thread that runs through them is a passion for building community, retention and a deep understanding of your customer. Today I lead on rider experience and retention across ten markets and head up our Gender Equity employee resource group.

Deliveroo has three customer types: the brands we work with, our riders, and our customers. The opportunity to simultaneously deliver positive a experience to each of these customer types attracted me to the industry. Delivering positive experience for all three of our customers takes agility and hyper focus, something I find as exciting and challenging today.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

You don't need to know the exact role or industry you're going to end up in so don't put too much pressure on yourself to have it all figured out. Know your passion and the culture you want to be part of and let that lead your career path.

to plan. Vulnerability doesn't show weakness, it builds vital connection, showing strength and learning. Understanding the needs and preferred communication style of different members of your team is a work super power, understand your people really well and tailor your management style to individuals.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

That those working with me feel that I've made a path for them to grow, I've created psychologically safe spaces for colleagues to push outside of their comfort zone and I've kept equity at the forefront of my decision making.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Vulnerability and emotional intelligence. No leader has all the answers, so I value those who actively seek out others' opinions, show openness if they do not know something and are honest when something hasn't gone

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL? How can we overcome them?

Roadblocks to inclusion can be unknown if someone has not experienced the same circumstances. As leaders and colleagues in this sector we have a responsibility to find opportunities to ask open questions on equity, listen carefully, and be open to reframing our views.

We can overcome this with allyship. It's not a new concept, but once you understand the challenges underrepresented groups face, you can identify specific action you can take and be a voice that highlights where inclusion should be considered. It is everyone's responsibility.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Someone I'd highlight is Deliveroo's Camilla Kater, advisor to the CEO & SVP of Rider & Care - she proactively shows inclusion values and leads with authenticity.

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

The Culture Code, it's about high performing teams in a range of industries and what makes them unique.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

How AI will be used to drive efficiencies in the on-demand delivery sector.

“ No leader has all the answers, so I value those who actively seek out others' opinions, show openness, and are honest.”



Inna Lim

Company **Sodexo** / Job Title **Director of Marketing, Strategy & Execution**



With over 15 years of work experience, I am a passionate and driven leader in the field of strategy and marketing, with a focus on delivering innovative and impactful solutions for our clients and consumers. I am currently the Director of Marketing,

Strategy & Execution at Sodexo, a global leader in food and workplace experience services. I am motivated by the mission of improving the well-being of individuals and communities through sustainable and responsible practices. I bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the team, having worked and studied in different countries and cultures. In my current role, I am responsible for developing and executing the division's strategic vision, goals, and initiatives, as well as managing the marketing budget, campaigns, and communications. I also lead the implementation of new processes, tools, and systems to enhance operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. I leverage my analytical and strategic skills to deliver high-quality results and outcomes for the organisation and its stakeholders. As Sodexo continues transforming our Food Services offers to our corporate clients, my team and I are working on three exciting brand refresh projects this year. Look forward to introducing our work in the UK and Ireland market soon!

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

My parents, third-generation Korean immigrants worked extremely hard to establish their roots in the ex-Soviet Union. Their relentless efforts to establish a life in a new land became the foundation of my own work ethic. Such upbringing has profoundly shaped my life and career, as I worked hard to establish my roots in the UK since I came here in 2001.

In addition to my parents, there are influential

figures in my life whose qualities I deeply admire. Authenticity, integrity, and honesty are exemplified by those I look up to. People who prioritise doing good for both business and the planet have become role models, showcasing that success isn't only measured in personal achievements but in making a positive impact on a broader scale. The importance of conducting business with a sense of purpose, one that aligns with both personal values and the well-being of the planet, has become a cornerstone in my career aspirations.



What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I aspire to be remembered as someone who tirelessly strives to enhance the business incrementally every day. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, we can adapt to evolving needs, exceed customer expectations, and create a workplace that thrives on innovation and excellence. Being a role model holds special significance for me, especially as a parent and stepparent to four teenagers. I want to exemplify determination, resilience, and a commitment to making a meaningful impact every day.



I aspire to be remembered as someone who tirelessly strives to enhance the business incrementally every day.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

A previous mentor of mine, now a CEO of one of the largest construction companies in the UK, always taught me the importance of being authentic. This quality became one of the pillars of my professional and personal brand.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?
My parents.

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

I would seek a career that allows me to travel the world or teaching kids about health and well-being.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The acceleration of the use of digital technology.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Her Majesty The Queen.



Mia Manson-Bishop

Company **David Lloyd Clubs** / Job Title **Club Experience and Membership Director**



I left university with a degree in Marketing and quickly realised that I had a passion for people and customer service.

My personal circumstances allowed me to move around the world for roles, which inevitably benefited my progression. My early career was

leadership focused, in contact centres, and I led large teams across multiple sites, languages and channels. I worked in many operationally complex businesses and understood the need for detail and the demands of working at a fast pace to deliver great results.

Two decades of leadership roles later, I know that creating change means understanding, working collaboratively, and influencing people. My journey has instilled in me that to be a catalyst for change, you must be aware of interpersonal dynamics, be focused, disciplined, and have a relentless commitment to excellence.

I have stayed the longest at companies with great people exhibiting the right values, culturally aligned and inclusive, like Wyndham Hotel Group and my current employer, David Lloyd Clubs. My current role perfectly combines my strengths and passion - an Exec-level, customer-centric leadership role representing the voice of all our lovely members whilst working collaboratively with people I truly like.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I have mostly worked in this sector, and the conversation around I&D has certainly changed and progressed positively. When I first started my career in the UK just over 25 years ago, I&D wasn't on the agenda at all and in fact it was the complete opposite. I remember in the early days being flabbergasted when an interviewer spent more time talking about my husband's rugby career than mine and then

progressed to tell me why I shouldn't take that role and how I would and should follow his career. I genuinely believe that he thought he was being super nice and helpful to me. I became an Operations Director of a large multi-national company, at age 27 just after my first daughter was born. A couple of years later, I remember having a conversation with a senior female leader who told me that I shouldn't have another baby as it would be seriously detrimental to my career. These types of conversations were the norm in those days

QUICKFIRE

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

During my summer holiday, I read *Rebel Ideas: The Power of Diverse Thinking* by Matthew Syed. It was such an interesting and relevant book.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The young adults in our sector will become the future leaders of

our industry. The young people in our sector and specifically at David Lloyd Clubs truly see the world through a different lens. Diversity and inclusion is part of who they are.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

If it could be anyone, alive or in memory then it would have to be Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela created the rainbow nation and made me proud to be South African.

and thankfully contrast to the behaviors that I now encounter, especially in our company.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I would like my colleagues to remember me for two things. Doing the right thing, not the easy thing as it's important to me and is one of our company values. Secondly for getting things done, removing barriers and being relentless about it.

What first inspired you into a career in HTL?

I love travel. My early career was in travel, and I am grateful for all those travel perks, experiences, and adventures. The excitement of new countries, people and food has really shaped who I am. We do spend a lot of our lives at work, and I truly believe you should enjoy what you do, be proud of who you work for, and the extra bonus is to be interested in and excited about the business you are in.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Asking for people's input or opinions, especially those with different views, skills, and backgrounds. You don't have to do everything that everyone says, but always stop, listen, consider, and build on ideas.

“ We spend a lot of our lives at work, and I truly believe you should enjoy what you do.

Fiona Martin

Company **Aramark UK** / Job Title **Managing Director, Education & Healthcare**



Having studied Hotel & Catering Management, I'd spent time as a student working in retail and hotels (UK and Europe) and wasn't really sure what I wanted to do. During my final degree year, I had the opportunity to work on a flexible basis combining

study and the world of contract catering. I was asked to apply for a management role with Gardner Merchant which is where I started my career. They had a fantastic management development programme meaning I was able to springboard my career into the operational world of contract catering. Within my time at Aramark, I have been fortunate enough to experience a wide breadth and depth of roles across various sectors, developing a broad area of expertise. Having the chance to combine all of this knowledge in my current role as Managing Director for our Education & Healthcare business is a fantastic privilege, and an opportunity to build a great team in a fast paced, diverse and dynamic sector, which is also fun. I've just celebrated my 20th year with Aramark UK, a testament to the fact that I love what I do!



What advice would you give to your younger self?

I'd encourage anyone to embrace the opportunities, it's important to broaden your experience and understand what motivates you to get up in the morning. Don't be too hard on yourself, there will be bumps in the road, we all make mistakes! I know I did along the way but learn from them to help shape your future. Trust and believe in yourself and stay true to your authentic self.

life balance. One doesn't have to be sacrificed for the other, it's about finding that harmony.

“ We all have a responsibility to bring the achievements of women in the industry to the fore.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

It is an industry which provides fantastic opportunities to grow and develop your career across a wide range of sectors and disciplines within the UK and internationally. The chances to build a diverse skill set are endless, giving you opportunities to change direction. It's a wonderful journey with people at the core. You will meet some amazing colleagues, build a great network and make friends for life.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Women have so much to offer this industry, and it's important that our future female talent have the opportunity to thrive and develop. We all have a responsibility to continue to bring the achievements of women in the industry to the fore; to inspire, support, and make a difference to the leaders of the future. It is important for women considering this sector to realise that it is an industry where you can have a long and varied career and achieve a work

QUICKFIRE

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

In my early years, I had considered a career within the Police force before starting my studies. I soon realised that the energy from food and people was infectious and haven't looked back since.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Over the last few years, the industry has gone through a huge digital transformation, with Gen Z and Alpha used to having access to everything at their fingertips. Whilst AI is starting to transform the food industry in many ways, especially high-

street fast-food chains, I'm excited to see how this technology will filter into the food service sector, helping us to transform customer experiences, reduce operating costs and improve efficiencies delivering better value for our clients. Technology has had a huge effect on the way hospitality businesses operate, and we have had to adapt quickly. I believe how we use this in the business will evolve for years to come.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Steven Bartlett, inspirational for so many reasons and to future generations.



Adela Maynard-Bielecka

Company **PizzaExpress** / Job Title **Regional Director**



In 2011, I embarked on my journey in the hospitality industry as a part-time team member. As soon as I started, I fell in love with the sector. I was filled with passion and excitement, which led me to join PizzaExpress in 2012, again starting as a team member.

I closely observed my General Manager then, and my eagerness to learn and do more grew. My roles in various restaurants laid the foundation for my leadership skills. By 2014, I proudly stepped into my first managerial position, overseeing one of the PizzaExpress restaurants. At PizzaExpress, I've worked in different restaurant and operation positions. I gained diverse experiences and met inspiring people along the way. I am proud to share that my relentless dedication and hard work have paid off and allowed me to achieve a significant career milestone. Recently, I was promoted to the position of Regional Director of London. I am responsible for leading a team of over 120 restaurants in the capital. My journey is more than a personal success story; it's a testament to the power of passion, hard work, and a supportive network in the amazing hospitality and leisure industry.



“The ultimate objective is to influence growth for both employees and the business.”

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

Wow, I'm super excited to be nominated! I've been an

avid follower of the Women to Watch Index for years and being recognised is such an amazing privilege. It's important for us to support and cheer each other on.

What does 'success' mean to you?

To me, success has multiple meanings. One of them is breaking barriers for successors. Personal satisfaction, passion, and

QUICKFIRE

What would you be doing if you weren't working in HTL?

A barrister would be an ultimate dream job.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I am excited to witness the evolution of the sector using technology in the coming years.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Stefani Germanotta, who is famously known as Lady Gaga. She is an accomplished businesswoman and the founder of the Born This Way charity, dedicated to promoting mental health and empowering young people to create a more courageous world. I love her approach to breaking barriers.

purpose are also essential, especially after spending many years in the same company. The ultimate objective is to influence growth for both employees and the business.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

A previous manager of mine once advised me to always be my own biggest fan, and to celebrate every success, no matter how big or small. He also suggested that I try not to be too self-critical, as there will always be someone else to do that for me.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I believe that honesty and integrity are crucial qualities in a person and a great leader. A great leader should always strive to support their team and manage performance effectively at the same time.

“I've been an avid follower of the Women to Watch Index for years and being recognised is such an amazing privilege.”

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I think as a sector we are moving in the right direction, with a long way to go to get to the desired destination. My recent progression is a testament to the movement itself. The UK is on the right path, with many countries sadly far behind. We are all responsible for promoting I&D in everything we do and the decisions we make.

Alex Moon

Company IQ Student Accommodation / Job Title General Counsel & Chief of Staff



I am a corporate / M&A lawyer by background, with more than twenty years' experience working in legal, compliance and HR roles. My in-house career started in the financial services sector where I held various general counsel roles, latterly becoming GC

for the Emerging Markets division at RSA Insurance and GC and Company Secretary of Novae, a listed Lloyd's syndicate. Since 2018 I have been the General Counsel of iQ Student Accommodation, one of the largest providers of purpose-built student accommodation in the UK, and in 2021 became the Chief of Staff, assuming responsibility for the People and H&S functions alongside legal, risk and compliance. I played a leading role in the acquisition of iQ by Blackstone in 2020, in what was the UK's largest ever private real estate transaction at the time.

QUICKFIRE

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

I re-watched *Kipchoge* recently, the film about his quest to break the 2-hour marathon. He famously said 'no human is limited' and I think it's an attitude that you can translate into any aspect of life including work – great teamwork, consistency and resilience beat 'talent' every day of the week.

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

Hopefully doing a challenging GC/Chief of Staff role in another interesting business! I have moved sectors during my career because I thrive on change and enjoy learning the dynamics of a new business.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The need for high quality student accommodation is greater than ever and it's an exciting time to be working in the sector. University is a hugely important transitional time for students and accommodation has a significant role to play in successful outcomes for students: providing a safe, welcoming home to build connections and get the most of their university experience.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Floella Benjamin – I love her relentless positivity. She is such an inspiration for a whole generation of kids of my age, achieving great things against all the odds. A real trailblazer.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

The old saying of 'you can't be what you can't see' remains true today at senior levels. I remember starting out in my career and looking upwards within my law firm and there were almost no senior women, despite a graduate intake which was 50/50. The world has changed, but it remains important for those looking upwards today to see a diverse range of leaders and know that there are many different ways to make it to a leadership position.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Honesty, and the ability to listen to new ideas, critically appraise performance and face up to issues. Teams work best when ideas and problems can be shared openly as a team and in an environment where there is trust within the group.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

A former boss once told

me not to wait until I thought I could do all elements of a role before putting myself forward for something – he famously said 'most men would put themselves forward for something when they can only do half of what is needed'! Whether that is true or not, I don't know, but it was the push I needed to believe that I should back myself to learn on the job and be successful.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The toughest jobs are the ones which make you. Early on in my career I took on a regional pan-European role involving some really tough markets, as we headed into the credit crunch. It was a massive learning curve and a big leadership challenge managing a team across different geographies when the results were under pressure. I don't think I enjoyed all of it at the time, but looking back, it was foundational for me as a leader and definitely shaped my confidence in myself.



Nicola Morris

Company ISS UK & Ireland / Job Title Managing Director



I have been working in the industry for over 27 years. During this time, I have had many roles in contracting and on the high street in restaurants. My first role in hospitality contracting, after a stint on the high street, was running catering and events at the Natural History Museum

and from this I progressed to more regional roles in leisure, defence/government and business and industry contracts. I have also had the opportunity to grow through moving out of the operational comfort zone, taking on director roles in specialisms like sales, marketing, communication, and customer experience. This has helped with the various Managing Director roles that I have held, where I have been lucky to work with clients partnering in the delivery of multiple service streams including engineering, security, cleaning, food and workplace experience.

My passion, apart from creating amazing experiences for people in work or leisure, is the voice and action I can now lend to improving the opportunities for people in the industry through social impact activities and campaigning for equity and inclusion.



What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

It's an honour to be included with so many talented leaders and makes me feel recognised for the work and achievements I have had. Secondly, I think it helps more junior

women realise that you can succeed and have impact but not compromise on being your authentic self. You don't have to be more masculine or less emotional. You will be successful when you are just being you and being kind.

QUICKFIRE

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

I always return to *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Perez – it reminds me that some of the challenge I face is far more deep-rooted than behaviours, so not to get too frustrated.

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

I always wanted to be an actress, but life and responsibility got in the way.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Keanu Reeves – nothing deep here just a middle-aged women wishing she were Sandra Bullock in a Lake House!

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

It's intensified in recent years as businesses are being asked to report on their balance in leadership or lack of it and candidates are seeking aligned culture and values when they make decisions around where to work. As more insight surfaces that shows the profitability impact of diversity of thought in board positions, our industry needs to reflect the diversity of the world in which we live more than ever – for sustainability and to attract the best talent.

mirrors those. There is nothing more obstructive to progression than being at odds with a place where you spend so much time and when you find the right home you will

“ Understand what your personal values are and find an organisation that mirrors those.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

'You are enough, so be yourself' would be the first piece of advice, authenticity is key. When you spend time trying to be someone to fit what you think leadership is, it's not only exhausting but not sustainable. Secondly, understand what your personal values are and find an organisation that

thrive and be positioned for growth. Finally keep a list of achievements on an ongoing basis, a brag list if you may, it helps with factually evidencing your value in reviews and reminding you that you are doing a great job when the impostor syndrome kicks in.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Being happy. Having impact and leaving a positive legacy.



Inge Van Ooteghem

Company Premier Inn Germany / Job Title Managing Director



I am currently the Managing Director of Premier Inn and, as Chief Operating Officer COO, I am responsible for the hotel brand's operational business in Germany. With enthusiasm and years of experience, I ensure that the British hotel market leader will replicate its UK

success here in Germany. 56 Premier Inn hotels are now open and around 90 sites have been secured in total. I have worked my entire career in hospitality, and I still love it as much as on the first day. During my career I've had the chance to work in different countries, lead amazing teams and be part of creating new concepts and find innovative solutions for emerging problems.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mum. She started a career in a time when it wasn't commonplace at all to grow a career and be ambitious as a woman. In her very own way, she shattered little glass ceilings whilst at the same time being present and in the moment for her children, with unconditional love.

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

A book named *Unreasonable Hospitality: the remarkable power of giving people more than they expect*, by Will Guidara.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The use of digital enablers to give our teams the time to focus on what is most important: the interaction with our guests and a smooth-running great service.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

As it is a party, I would invite more than one guest. I'd definitely invite the Obamas, Nelson Mandela, Michael Jordan and David Bowie. It would certainly be an interesting evening.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I'd tell myself to be more patient and to enjoy the journey instead of only being focused on the target or next objective. Also, I would tell myself not to try to be best on all fronts all the time, and to make sure that there's a healthy balance between my private and professional life.

What first inspired you into a career in HTL?

I always wanted to travel and discover the world, and I love to interact with people. Thus, I thought I would give hospitality a try and this soon became a passion, and still is. I love to take my team on a journey, to coach them, inspire them and support them to become the best they can possibly be.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

For me a leader needs to inspire and truly listen to their teams. First and foremost, it is crucial to understand that without their teams, a leader will

never achieve their set goals. A leader is only as good as the team they work with. The foundations of leadership are honesty and absolute respect for each and every team member alike.

“ The foundations of leadership are honesty and absolute respect for each and every team member alike.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

That's definitely to know when to speak and when to listen.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Just do it! Hospitality is an amazing industry and one of the few industries left that creates and gives opportunities to everyone.



Jenny Packwood

Company **KFC UK & Ireland** / Job Title **Chief Corporate Affairs & Sustainability Officer**



I passionately believe in the vital role that businesses play in tackling the environmental and social challenges the world faces today. I started at KFC UK & Ireland in 2008, and over the past 15 years I have played a critical role in both the evolution of the brand

and the focus the business has on sustainability and social impact. I led KFC's journey to improve chicken welfare, culminating in the business being ranked top of World Animal Protection's The Pecking Order report in 2021. I led the strategy for KFC to become the first in its sector to sign the Better Chicken Commitment in 2018, and the Red Tractor Agreement, and facilitated the introduction of KFC's annual Welfare Report. At COP26, I led KFC's net-zero announcement, committing to becoming a circular zero waste business in food, packaging, and materials by 2035, as well as becoming a net zero carbon business by 2040.



What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL? How can we overcome them?

The hours in hospitality can sometimes be difficult to manage with family life, which I think can put off a lot of women when they have children. We need to find a way of making flexibility the norm, so that parents – men and women – can fulfill their commitments at home and still grow a career in the sector.

that those at the top have that you don't. Everyone is making it up as they go along!

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Confidence is EVERYTHING. And nothing good happens when you operate from a place of fear.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I want to drive forward the agenda that businesses, particularly our sector, can have a really positive impact on society. We bring people together, which has never been more important. We provide social glue. But we can also play a huge role in driving positive change that benefits the planet, people and our communities. Whether that is through decarbonising our supply chains, tackling food waste, or helping those locked out from work get their first job, there is so much good that we do. So I'd like to be remembered for helping to make sustainability and doing the right thing the norm, and something that helps businesses to thrive, not just survive.

“ I'd like to be remembered for helping to make sustainability and doing the right thing the norm, and something that helps businesses to thrive, not just survive.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Believe in the value you bring. Just because you have a different perspective doesn't make it any less important or relevant. And let me tell you a secret: there is no 'special magic'

QUICKFIRE

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

I'm obsessed with *Slow Horses*. I can't bear the wait for season 4!

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

I literally have no clue. My first Saturday job was in hospitality, waitressing. My grandfather and uncle were chefs. It's in my blood! But maybe working for a heritage organisation like The National Trust or English Heritage? I gave up on the dream of being a vet when I nearly fainted when we had to dissect a frog at school.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I'm excited about the potential for transformation and innovation that the climate crisis is going to unlock. I think we're going to see some really bold moves as we look at how we decarbonise – whether that's using insect protein in chicken feed or the redesign of kitchen equipment to radically reduce energy use.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Dominic Sandbrook and Tom Holland – historians and hosts of my favourite podcast *The Rest is History*. They are funny and clever and I'm a total history geek so this would be heaven!



Rebecca Parr-Phillips

Company ODEON Cinemas Group / Job Title Operations Director



Looking back, my passion for hospitality started when I got my first job as a waitress when I was still studying at school. In my early career, I joined a management programme where I had the opportunity to learn from great leaders around me. Not only did this reinforce

that hospitality was the place for me but it also opened me up to leadership and gave me a career path I could really start to grow in. During my career, I have managed many different restaurants before moving into regional roles and then senior leader roles. I combined my love of operations and leading people to work across some fantastic well-known brands along the way. I joined ODEON Cinemas in 2017, supporting and leading teams to create inspiring entertainment experiences for our guests. This was simply a dream role for me! I currently lead the UK and Ireland Operations team, supporting our 120 cinemas and their teams alongside leading key supporting functions including Food and Beverage and our facilities teams. Additionally, I am about to start an interim role to leading and supporting our Northern Europe countries across Sweden, Norway and Finland.



What first inspired you into a career in HTL?

I love everything about hospitality; I was hooked on the vibrancy of every day being so different, new people and new challenges. Being able to make a difference to people's experiences really matters to me. When I was recognised by my employer as having leadership potential, I was delighted to

learn more about what an amazing and fulfilling career I could have.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Being authentic is really important to me. I have had many experiences throughout my career where being true to myself has been a real challenge, both personally and

QUICKFIRE

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

I was destined to be working where I am, although if I'd failed at being a singer/dancer which was a given, I'd most definitely be teaching.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The pace of change

around DE&I. If the willingness to learn and adapt our ways continues like it has in the last few years, we have an awful lot to be excited about

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Ooh so many! It would have to be one of the many powerful and inspiring women from our history.

professionally. It took me a long time to really accept that the 'authentic me' brought a much richer value to those working around me. To be able to really enjoy what you do, bringing nothing less to it than your full self has been a great but long lesson learnt.

different teams, travelling to new places and working across different cultures. Sometimes it can be small things, like working a shift to cover somewhere different or even trying out a different task for a day. Embrace the fun and the fast pace that hospitality can bring.

“ It took me a long time to really accept that the 'authentic me' brought a much richer value to those working around me.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I have seen an incredible amount of change over the last 25 years, much being around the willingness to learn which has been inspiring. The conversation has literally gone from zero to a consistent and ever-increasing involvement. This is having a huge positive impact on our people and in turn our business. I have felt it personally too, working in an environment where you're not accepted or valued for who you are can be really limiting. Being able to thrive openly whilst encouraging and inspiring others is just so rewarding.

What would say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Go for it and take every opportunity that you can! I have gained so much through the many different experiences that I've had. Working with

Zarin Patel

Company Pets at Home Group, Anglian Water, Hays, National Trust and HM Treasury
Job Title Senior Independent Director and Chair of Audit & Risk Committee



I started my career as a chartered accountant at KPMG, which was a superb training ground for a career in business. I was always curious about how the world worked and my 15 years at KPMG gave me experience of a wide variety of sectors and how the best companies

are run by great leaders. I moved to the BBC and worked there for 15 years where I was Group Financial Controller, CEO of its Revenue Generation business, and the BBC's longest serving, first woman and first non-white CFO. I am now a portfolio non-executive director and lead companies across a range of sectors: from pets to people and essential services, nature, heritage and the country's finances. I relish variety. I am passionate about encouraging people from all walks of life to blossom in their careers and mentor women and people of colour into leadership roles.



“ I no longer wait for people to spot my talent but embrace my accomplishments and focus on progress, not perfection.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in retail? How can we overcome them?

Retail and hospitality are both exciting but also incredibly tough environments, especially so in the current economic context. I do wonder if the sector is doing enough to build careers and experience whilst being able to work flexibly too. Strategies that make job-sharing the norm would be a good place to start.

What does 'success' mean to you?

I have a simple mantra for success: do good work and keep learning, help people blossom in their careers and leave behind a better, stronger company.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would tell my younger self to be much braver about career choices and to go for opportunities even if I didn't feel ready for them. I no longer wait for people to spot my talent but embrace my accomplishments and focus on progress, not perfection.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

Publications like Women to Watch have given the oxygen of publicity to the incredible diverse and talented individuals working in our sector and shown companies that leaders in their organisation don't just need to sound or look like them. I am a firm believer that companies make better decisions when they reflect the very rich nature of our society, and you can see how the sector is actively changing in bringing diverse experience to the benefit of customers.

QUICKFIRE

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

I am obsessed with how generative Artificial Intelligence will change the world of business, and I have enrolled for an AI programme at a business school to dive into the subject and understand how to take advantage and add value to the companies I work with.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I'd be at my first love, the BBC – but this time not as their CFO but on the production team for Strictly Come Dancing.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Freddy Mercury and Tina Turner... what a blast they would be!



Surinder Phuller

Company Hilton / Job Title Senior Director, Marketing Centres of Excellence (Media, Content, Insights)



Leading Hilton's Marketing Centres of Excellence in EMEA, I lead diverse technical teams including Performance Media, Campaign Strategy & Planning, Audience Insights and Digital Platforms (Content). With 13 years at Hilton, I've cherished life-changing experiences

working and living abroad. My digital advertising journey began in 2006, spanning agencies and client-side roles in the UK. As a passionate and mindful leader, I champion representation, belonging, and wellness within my team, the broader profession, and the local community.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

The significance of emphasising women leaders in HTL is underscored by compelling statistics. Moreover, it extends beyond highlighting women leaders. We should be placing emphasis on promoting diverse leadership, ensuring equal opportunities for all, fostering an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds can excel, and setting examples that inspire others.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

The impactful role models in my life have been individuals who faced adversity and understood the challenges of being different but refused to be hindered by them. Their resilience and unwavering passion fuelled their determination to not just survive but to thrive and make significant contributions. I draw

inspiration from my father, who demonstrated remarkable perseverance on his journey. History reflects a commitment to overcoming challenges, and it's a source of inspiration for my own determination. My mother's journey from a midwife to Managing Director of child and social services in the NHS reflects her relentless dedication and commitment.

“As a passionate and mindful leader, I champion representation, belonging, and wellness within my team.

What does 'success' mean to you?

The concept of 'success' has taken on different meanings for me at various points in my career. It has evolved in tandem with

my lifestyle and priorities. Currently, success, for me, is synonymous with balance, growth, and a more deliberate pace. These elements enable me to bring out my best self, appreciate life's moments, and continually strive for excellence.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

I have learned to move beyond crafting career-siloed plans to adopting holistic self-development plans, embracing a path that encompasses personal, home, and community dimensions. This gives me a balanced and well-rounded growth

plan that propels me to becoming my best, well-rounded self.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I highly value courage, a challenger spirit, and a growth mindset. A brave leader inspires resilience, a challenger encourages innovation, and a growth mindset fosters continuous improvement.

Equally crucial is vulnerability, which cultivates authenticity and trust. Sensitivity to I&D is paramount, ensuring a rich tapestry of perspectives that enhances collective strength.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My husband. I admire his creativity, his ability to learn, his humbleness and his parenting of our children. I learn so much from him and he keeps me grounded when I need it.

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

If I weren't so passionate about hospitality, I'd probably be moonlighting as a professional house admirer! I have this thing for ogling at people's homes, specifically the architecture and design, especially with charming period properties. It's like stepping back in time and wondering about the folks who once called those places home. I guess you could call me a part-time

history detective with a soft spot for beautiful houses!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

There is an abundance of technology opportunities but most exciting for our sector is figuring out which ones bring us closer to providing exceptional service and building beneficial relationships with consumers. This cannot be achieved through technology alone, so figuring out how we automate what we can to free up team members to add the magic that makes The Stay special at Hilton is what excites me.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Mo Gawdat.

Kathryn Richmond

Company Searcys / Job Title Development Director



I have worked in hospitality since I was 14, when I started as a kitchen porter in a local pub. Hospitality was a calling – giving people moments of happiness gave me huge joy from day one! Time is so precious. If someone chooses to spend their leisure time with you, that's a great privilege.

I studied Hotel and Catering Management at the University of Surrey, achieving a First Class Honours. My placement was an amazing management development programme with PizzaExpress, which gave me the opportunity to manage my own restaurant at the age of 22. I then spent several years managing independent restaurants and bars in Vancouver and London.

My first role in contract catering was with Compass as a Business Development Manager, and I progressed through various roles in operations, projects and retention. I moved to the WSH group in 2018, first with BaxterStorey in Sales, and latterly as Business Development Director for Searcys. I have recently started a new role as Searcys Development Director, with responsibility across new and organic growth, mobilisations, ESG, Food Development and Innovation.



What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

It is a huge honour! I have reviewed nominations in the past with great interest, admiring the diverse careers and successes of the women who have been nominated. To now be amongst them, is incredibly exciting!

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

The transformation has been huge. In my experience, misogynistic comments and bias were commonplace ten years ago, and I certainly felt that I had less of a voice to articulate concerns. Today, the conversation around I&D means there is much greater awareness of how people's different experiences and influences shape what makes their contributions unique. As an industry with such incredible diversity, we must be at the forefront of driving positive change.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

'Control the controllables!'. My dad gave me this advice and I still think of it today. The working

environment can be stressful and busy – so making sure we keep our focus and emotional energy on what we can influence is imperative!

“ A well-considered opinion is always worth voicing.”

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I would like to be remembered for having a positive impact in ESG. I'm very passionate about both people and the planet. We have the capacity to have a huge, positive impact across both in this sector, and I don't believe there is anything more important.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

'Your opinion is valid, be assured in voicing it'. For several years having less life and professional experience than others made me feel like my views had less merit, but I was wrong. A well-considered opinion is always worth voicing.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Yvon Chouinard – Founder of Patagonia. His move in 2022 to transfer ownership of the company to ensure all profits go to protecting the planet is inspiring!

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

I studied drama at school and loved both acting and stage management/production. If I hadn't ended up in hospitality this is where I would like to be.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Our capacity to create

positive change. Our environmental and social impact in hospitality is huge. There is so much more focus on this. There is also a much greater willingness for competitors to work together to find solutions, challenge the status quo and push the boundaries. This is incredibly exciting!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Joanna Lumley! She is incredibly talented, educated, funny and would have amazing stories to share of her global travels and diverse career.



Rachel Riley

Company **British Airways** / Job Title **Director Commercial Strategy and Planning**



Firstly, I'm a mom of two young men who make me proud and inspire me to be better. Raising them as a single mother made us a strong team, and no one challenges me to keep growing more than they do.

My interest in aviation sparked as a 12-year-old in Montego Bay when my high school class toured the airport. I left convinced I'd be an aeronautical engineer! Not quite the path I've taken, instead I grabbed the opportunity to do my Maths degree's industrial placement within British Airways' Operational Research department, which I then later fully joined on the graduate scheme.

Since then, I've enjoyed a fascinating journey through roles which continued to challenge me, from analytical positions within the Commercial area, to developing the Americas route network as Network Development Manager, to more recently leading the transformation of the commercial organisation at BA Cityflyer as the Head of Commercial, before moving into my current role. My focus is now to ensure BA's Commercial organisation is driven by inspired and engaged colleagues with an aligned view of our strategic direction and the role they play in delivering our ambitious goals, with the plans in place to meet them.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I can't point to a single role model as the truth is my biggest sources of inspiration come from my family, starting with my parents, my three brothers and my two sons. They've all taught me more than any distant personality I could think of.

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

"What's happening inside you need not be dictated by what's happening on the outside". I'm learning that my emotional

response or how I feel about a situation is mine to control and am working on that.

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

Trying to make a living through music in some way!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

If we could bring him back, Prince. I'd want to learn from him how he challenged himself to be great while defying being placed in any singular box!



What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Challenging and open to challenge, supportive, trusting, empathetic, honest, wise, consistent.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around I&D evolve during your time in the sector?

When I started my career "inclusion", "diversity", "equity" were not common language. We've gone from almost no conversation to frequent conversation with some actions, and results starting to show. I work in a far more diverse environment than when I started my career and it's great to see the progress that's been made. I'm looking forward to that progress continuing.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL? How can we overcome them?

A particular challenge we have is where bias leads to very subtle discrimination. Those small acts that are difficult to prove, let alone "call out", e.g., how the expert advice of one person is treated, how one person's achievement is recognised, how an individual is selected for development, vs another. When biases occur, there are implications on people's ability to have a voice, to be heard, to

develop. There isn't a lot of conversation about this, frankly, as it is so difficult to pinpoint, and the solutions are not obvious.

We must be prepared to have difficult conversations. Those who feel bias has worked against them need the courage and space to talk about what's happened and the effect it has had on them, and others must be prepared to hear tough challenges and sit in the discomfort that brings. Then we can jointly get to some solutions, but it starts with tough talk. Until that happens, we will severely limit the progress that can be made.

“ We must be prepared to have difficult conversations.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Find what you are great at, your superpower and focus on building that. It wasn't obvious to me at the time, nor was it easy for me to hone in on what my key strengths are – sometimes you need others around you to help highlight the thing that comes naturally for you but doesn't for others. The thing that you enjoy contributing and has your highest impact.



Jennifer Roebuck

Company **Tortilla** / Job Title **Co-founder**



I have more than 25 years of digital innovation and consumer growth experience, including launching start-ups and scaling UK fashion brands. I advise consumer-focused start-ups on growth, while focusing on the next wave of creative industry innovation in venture growth. I co-founded

the UK's largest Mexican food chain, Tortilla, which went public in 2021.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

What's interesting about hospitality and retail is that they're both largely driven by women. The workforce composition is female, the customers are female, but there's not the representation at the senior levels. Somehow there are very few women around that top table. So, I think it's hugely important to recognise the work that women are doing in what can be extremely tough industries. It's critical that women have role models to demonstrate that the journey to the top is possible.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

From a career perspective and in my personal life, my role models have been people who have clarity of thought, who don't take any crap from anyone, who speak up on behalf of themselves and their team, and who fight for what they think is right. I've worked for some amazing people

– but I've also worked for those who I didn't think were good leaders. And that's been so valuable in teaching me what not to do. It's been helpful to have both ends of the spectrum.

What's the best professional advice you've ever received?

Honestly the best piece of advice I've ever received is that 90 per cent of most people's behaviour has nothing to do with you. And that's incredibly profound and useful because people spend so much time obsessing over the behaviour of others – but really most people are just making their own way through life. Their behaviour is rarely a reflection of you. Once you change your perspective on that it can help you understand people a lot more.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Freedom. Having the freedom to work with people I love, in areas that I love and staying true to myself.



QUICKFIRE

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

So my dream dinner party guest would be Elon Musk because he's an insanely polarising character who has done brilliant things, and terrible things at the same time. I would love to pick his brain.

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

I read a newsletter on

LinkedIn about the skills required to ask the right questions, and how important questions were. That was fascinating.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I'm excited about artificial intelligence – because I think it means that the roles which have historically been undervalued (like creativity and brand thinking) will become overvalued.



Fiona Scattergood

Company **SSP Group** / Job Title **Group General Counsel & Company Secretary**



The F&B industry has been part of my career right from the outset, since my first job on a pizza counter, through to representing various F&B clients as a corporate lawyer, and for the last 12.5 years, my journey to Group General Counsel & Company Secretary at SSP Group plc, where

I now lead the legal, company secretarial and compliance functions. I always used to tell prospective law students that experience working as a waitress/bartender can provide the best starting point for so many careers and I still believe that now, probably more strongly than ever!

I started at SSP on a secondment in 2011 after over 10 years working as a corporate lawyer in Sydney and London, and quickly realised I wanted to be part of the team permanently. During my time at SSP, I have worked across many different functional and regional parts of the business, including playing key roles on our significant corporate events (including our IPO, various refinancings, new country entries and key acquisitions) before taking on my current role on the SSP leadership team. The one constant during this time being that I never felt like an arm's length lawyer, simply part of the business.



What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Very early on in my career, a partner I worked with, Tony Damian, taught me the importance of curiosity, it's ok not to know everything and there is no harm in asking questions whatever stage you're at. It's something that has stayed with me throughout my career and outside of it and is a key quality I seek out in team members and think we should all instill in the next generation.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

While our industry has great diversity at the front line, it drops off as you go up the organisation. The evolution of the DE&I discussion over the last ten years for me is the move from rhetoric to meaningful action. There is now a better understanding of the importance of the D&I rather than just the "E". It feels like the penny has finally dropped that real diversity of thought is not only the right thing to have but is actually good for business.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be yourself and be confident in who you are and what you can deliver. Constantly comparing yourself to others is never worthwhile. Not everyone takes the same path through their careers and that is what makes us interesting.

Mistakes are rarely the end of the world – but take the time to learn from them. Early in your career, taking risks can be challenging, but finding the confidence to back your knowledge and experience to take a calculated risk is really empowering and will only help with your development.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The value of taking time to put yourself in other people's shoes and to think about the different opinions around the room. There is rarely one way of doing something, and being open to hearing other people's ideas brings a diversity of thought that will nearly always lead to better decision making.

QUICKFIRE

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

That global food production and consumption contributes c.34% of global GHG emissions – reminded me how much of a role our industry has to play in the journey to net zero and therefore the opportunity we have to lead in this space.

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

Easy: a kids cake maker, baking has always been a

passion and having kids to do birthday cakes for gives me an outlet to be creative!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Our purpose is to be the "best part of the journey" and as the industry has recovered out of Covid and people have started travelling again, there is so much opportunity for us to continue to deliver on that, whether through constantly evolving our culinary expertise, leading the way on sustainable food production, or digital innovation.

Victoria Self

Company **Entain** / Job Title **Managing Director (Product & Tech) – Player Experience**



Since 2000, I've built and scaled ecommerce and digital products for pureplay and global retailers spanning fashion, telco, consumer tech and financial services. I've worked at C-Suite level, as Digital Director and Chief Product Officer, focused on digital transformation, omnichannel experience

and building world class products. I've built and led multi-functional teams and operating models; from start-up to global scaled divisions. I've a massive passion for leading teams to be brave, challenge the status quo, and to put customers first. Having spent more than twenty years in retail, I'm now leading a global product and tech team to transform our customer experiences at Entain plc. Entain is one of the world's largest sports betting and gaming groups, operating both online and in retail. (It has 30+ brands, +2k retail stores, and is present in 40+ territories across the globe.)

QUICKFIRE

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Depeche Mode, I've followed them since I started in retail as a teen, and would get them to do a very small and intimate gig!

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

Shoe Dog by Phil Knight, the grit and determination

to keep going in the early days when Nike was running out of cash, to the genius of their vision for Michael Jordan and creating Air Jordans!

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

Working in the gaming and betting industry (as I am), in addition to being multichannel it is as pacy, relentless and as interesting as retail.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

They have opened my eyes to different ways of thinking, leading and communicating. Pushing me to evolve, completely out of my comfort zone.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Act like the CEO. This has manifested in two areas – championing the end-to-end customer experience. And 'joining the dots' across organisation silos; bringing teams together to solve complex problems, like multichannel retailing!

“ The most impactful leaders have been challenging to work for!

What first inspired you into a career in the consumer sector?

At 16 years old I had a Saturday job at Next, and found my passion. It started with the impact of VM (folding jumpers neatly on a display table!) witnessing the queues at

the tills. I loved the pace, trading focus and the mix of people. Leading me to more than twenty years at Mothercare, M&S, Urban Outfitters, Carphone Warehouse, & Currys.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

The most impactful leaders have been challenging to work for! They are relentless in their pursuit of a goal, brilliant at communicating the vision, brave to make tough decisions, and honest and transparent with their teams. Leaders who are passionate about the goal and secure enough to fully empower the teams to deliver.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

If you thrive in a pacy, commercial, people oriented, complex ever-changing environment, then go for it. Be prepared to get your sleeves rolled up, get close to the customer and into detail. You will learn so much across a diverse skillset like operations, marketing, commercial, leadership, digital. It is one of the most exciting, ever-changing industries.

Lisa Sewell

Company Flutter Entertainment / Job Title Chief People Officer



Coming from humble beginnings, with unwavering support from my parents, I was the first in my family to go to university. As such, I feel proud to have worked in some of the world's largest businesses through some history-defining moments and to have worked alongside some of the

UK's best leaders and a host of inspirational colleagues.

Three core experiences have grown me as a person and a leader. I spent ten years in RBS as one of the leadership team tasked with the divestment of non-core assets, as part of the turnaround and then laterally running the Group's shared services in India, Poland and UK. I had never worked so hard but learned loads and my career really took off as a result.

After that, I decided I wanted to challenge myself to run a full P&L, so when I was asked to become the MD of Dentons UK, Ireland, Middle East as the first non-lawyer to run a major law firm, I jumped at the chance. The change from Corporate to Partnership was both daunting and a relief and I thoroughly enjoyed the business of law.

In 2022, I joined Flutter's UK & Ireland division, running the People and Operations teams, before joining Flutter's Group Executive Committee leading the People Strategy across the global group. Now part of a federated business, I get the scale of a corporate and the individual connections and accountability of a Partnership. Having the experience of both has really helped. Moving into entertainment and leisure has been one of the most exciting stages of my career so far.



QUICKFIRE

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

My favourite book of all time is *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. It was ahead of its time, and even today, there are lessons to be learned from it.

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

I'd be running a cosy little coffee shop where people read the paper for hours and have a good chat.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Love her or hate her, Margaret Thatcher would be fascinating. I think she truly disrupted a man's world. And then Amal Clooney - a world leader in championing human rights. She has embraced the female traits of emotional intelligence, empathy and compassion to achieve in a man's world.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I've only been in the sector for a relatively short time, but the level of focus on Inclusion & Diversity at Flutter is completely different from anything I've seen before. The amount of executive committee and Board time spent on it is fantastic. I, and many of the other execs, personally spend a lot of time mentoring and sponsoring the women in the business to really help us reach our Positive Impact Plan, which aims to have 40% of top leadership roles held by women by the end 2026.

What impact have role models had in your life and career?

I've had the privilege of working with really great leaders, each of whom had

a different impact on me at different stages in my career. Some I was inspired by their intellect, others their ability to lead, and others their willingness to stand up for what's right and put their neck on the line for what they believe in.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Once, when I was doubting myself, my coach said to me: "it's not a coincidence that you're where you are in your career. Back yourself and trust your instinct." That has stayed with me.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Go for it! You'll get the best opportunities, meet the best people, and have the most fun.

Melissa Skluzacek

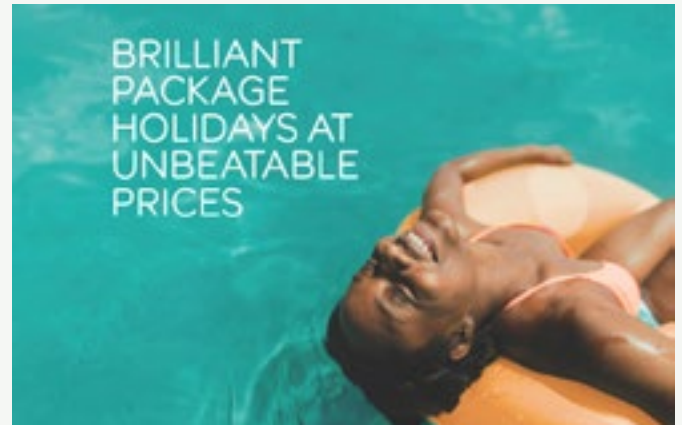
Company **easyJet** / Job Title **Director – Trading & Revenue Management**



I stumbled into aviation over 25 years ago and never looked back. Focusing primarily on revenue management and pricing, I attribute my longevity to the continuous evolution of the field – I am still learning every day. Revenue management is a great combination of business strategy,

behavioural economics and maths. It also requires close collaboration with many other areas across the business. After working for a variety of US carriers, I joined easyJet in January 2020 as Director, Trading & Revenue Management where I oversee the trading, commercial BI and revenue management and optimisation and data science teams.

Originally from Minneapolis, my career has moved me to a few different cities in the US. I always knew that I wanted to live abroad at some point with my family, so in 2020, my husband, two teenage daughters, our cat and I made the leap to the UK. Admittedly, our timing wasn't the greatest, but over the past couple of years, we have travelled to numerous different places around Europe – on easyJet, of course! I am a big supporter of women in STEM fields and believe that getting girls excited and proud of their interest in STEM topics at an early age is critical.



What advice would you give your younger self?

1. Don't be afraid to ask for what you want. The worst thing that will happen is that you will be told no. But, you will find more often than not that the answer is yes.
2. Stretch yourself – you don't have to tick every box to apply for or take on a new job.
3. Recognise where you have imposter syndrome so that you can counteract it.

Why do you feel it is important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Highlighting women leaders in HTL provides real life examples of women working in leadership roles throughout a variety of organisations and fields. Also, spotlighting female leaders' diverse life experiences and career paths demonstrates that there isn't one set way to find success and happiness in your career and life.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I would like to be remembered as someone who helped advance the field of revenue management over the years, in particular bringing together theory and practice. Equally important, I would like to be known as a leader who made a positive difference in the lives of people I worked with by providing a good example and helping people grow in their careers.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

1. Authenticity – I believe it is important for people to realise that we are all just people in the end.
2. Enabling – the best performance comes when a leader allows their people to shine in their roles, learning and growing throughout.
3. Collaborative – someone who listens to their team, encouraging everyone to work together towards a common goal by utilising the different strengths and perspectives of the team.

QUICKFIRE

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

The Infinite Game by Simon Sinek which hypothesizes that there is no end to the game of life or business. This philosophy means defining your vision and purpose – doing everything with that view in mind.

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

I was a teaching assistant whilst getting my master's degree in statistics. The job involved teaching courses, running math

clinics and providing one-on-one help for students. I absolutely loved it. So, if I wasn't in aviation, I could see myself as a maths professor.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I am excited to see how the revenue management field continues to evolve its processes and algorithms utilising more external data sources and advanced modelling techniques. And, most importantly, how does the user experience change as a result of these new methods.



Lucy Taylor

Company **KFC UK & Ireland** / Job Title **Chief Operations Officer**



I have been in Operations for 30 years and have been lucky enough to spend 20 of those years at KFC. But before I was in the world of chicken and chips, I was helping customers at Boots. I first joined through their graduate scheme. Coming from Manchester at the time it felt like a huge move to the 'big

smoke', I remember packing a flask and sandwiches with my parents! I learnt all areas of the business by working on the shop floor in one of their largest units in Liverpool Street Station and ended my career as a store manager at Notting Hill Gate. It was this early exposure to operations that gave me the bug.

Moving from Boots to J D Wetherspoons allowed me to scale the level of operations, managing ten assets for them, learning multi-site management, and fine tuning my strategic and people management skills whilst also doing what I love most, being on the shop floor with my teams.

At KFC I have been lucky enough that my career has taken me all over the world. Starting off in the UK as an Area Coach and then a Regional Coach, I took a strategic role for the global team visiting every key Business Unit from Singapore to Canada. I then became the Operations Director in Istanbul, before moving to Dubai as COO for KFC Middle East, North Africa, Pakistan, and Turkey, looking after over 1,000 restaurants.

I am now happy to be back in the UK after ten years away, with my husband Steve and our twins James and Alexandra. I'm running operations for the UK&I business, and I could not be prouder.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

There has always been a lack of women in operations and when I started my career, people would double-take when they saw me. The evolution of I&D was poignant for me when I was COO in Saudi Arabia. From having to have my husband sign a consent form to let me travel, to welcoming female guests driving themselves

to our Drive Thrus, the cultural evolution and journey of the country was palpable, and I feel privileged that I could experience and represent that change.

Coming back to the UK, it is great to see more women in the sector and I champion our Female Advantage Programme, The Wolfpack, to break down the barriers and give more women a seat at the table.

QUICKFIRE

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

I love watching *The Traitors* and (aside from it being so entertaining!) I find it really interesting because it just proves how important trust is in all relationships, especially within teams – and this is a vital lesson for our sector.

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

I've lived in a few different countries, and I love travelling and meeting people. So maybe a travel journalist.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Roger Federer. He's one of the greatest and most decorated tennis players of all time... and we could talk about being parents to twins!

“ Write down your goals for life! Take your time to really think about them, remember no goal is too big.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Write down your goals for life! Take your time to really think about them, remember no goal is too

big. For me, writing down my life goals has allowed me to become intentional and have a clear purpose in life both personally and professionally.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Care is such an undervalued but unbelievably important characteristic. It facilitates trust, team-work, and powers an individual's potential. A leader who cares puts others ahead of themselves and at the heart of what they do. Care is inspiring to others.



Jane Treasure

Company **PizzaExpress** / Job Title **Food & Beverage Director**



I am an experienced food and beverage professional with a strong reputation for innovation, strategy, menu planning and product launches. In total, I have spent over 25 years in the industry. I joined PizzaExpress in 2017 as Food & Beverage Director

and am responsible for food and beverage innovation and strategy across the brand's dine-in, dine-out (delivery) and retail channels. Recently, I have led the innovation of PizzaExpress' iconic Dough Balls, including Dough Balls in Blankets during Christmas 2023, relaunched the chilled retail range, and developed a new frozen supermarket offering, which allows customers to enjoy their restaurant favourites at home. Over the course of my career, I have developed products and menus for a range of global brands. Before joining PizzaExpress, I was Head of Food & Beverage at Costa, Senior Developer at McDonald's UK & Ireland and a Development Technologist at Pizza Hut International. I live in London, with my husband, two pizza-loving teenage daughters (who I often treat as a focus group) and two cats!

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Someone recently said to me, "It's not enough to be right" and I really like this. In product development and innovation, we get very fixated on the answer – and getting it correct. However, it's just as important to take everyone in the team along with you. It's a bit like climbing a mountain. The pace needs to work for everyone. It's no good being in front if you march off at 100 miles an hour.

What does 'success' mean to you?

There's an obvious sort of success which is going into a supermarket and seeing someone take a product you developed off the shelf

and put it in their basket. But I think a more important kind of success is leading a team who are performing well, enjoying their work, and building their careers.

At PizzaExpress, and in my previous roles, I have introduced supplier secondments and student placements into my teams. I get huge pleasure in seeing people I've managed go on to great things.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

It's an amazing industry but I would tell them to do the hard yards early – go into operations or

QUICKFIRE

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

I am a huge fan of podcasts. But my favourite has surprised me. It's the BBC's *Gangster* which is true crime and about how organised criminal gangs work. I find it absolutely fascinating and it has me thinking that, if my alternative career is being a paramedic (see below), my alternative, alternative career would be a police detective.

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

It's not an obvious answer,

but I've always wanted to be a paramedic. I like the combination of doing something important and working in a very high pressure, technical environment. I even looked at it at one point in lockdown, so that's my road not taken.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

If I'm allowed a fictional character, it would be Don Draper from *Mad Men*. He's the archetypal difficult creative genius – and I would love to get the best out of him. I wouldn't try and match him drink for drink though.

factories or spend time on the shop floor. Really learn your craft and get to know your industry and most importantly its customers.

Graduates often say, "I'd love your job" and I tell them that in my 20s, I was driving all over the country visiting factories working on test production lines (onion rings were a favourite!), running research panels and learning the numbers.

All of this can seem tough at the time but pays big dividends later in your career.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I have a real justice gene and I like leaders who are genuine, fair and value their people and treat them well. You'll go the extra mile for people like that.



Liz Wells

Company **Greene King** / Job Title **Insight and Customer First Director**



I started my marketing career at Alton Towers, an introduction to marketing that I will always be grateful for. There I got my first taste for working in an industry whose reason for being is to make people happy, and a role which was about creating and marketing 'fun', and I was hooked. From there,

I worked in a number of brand and commercial marketing roles at Thomas Cook, in theatre, and back with Merlin Entertainments, where I looked after the Global Brand team for Madame Tussauds.

I joined Greene King about seven years ago, first as a Brand Director, and then moving over to lead the Insight Team. I am lucky to be surrounded by some incredible Insight professionals, and what I love is seeing how Insight truly has the capability to change a business.

If you told me at the start of my marketing career that one day I would be leading an Insight team, I'm not sure I would have believed you. But one of the beauties of this industry, and of Greene King, is there is always evolution, so the opportunities for development and growth are fantastic.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

The conversation evolves each and every year, and we are starting to see clear and purposeful action in this area across our sector. There is plenty more to do, but personally, I'm really proud to be working somewhere with such a strong and authentic focus around inclusion and diversity. We can be more real, more vulnerable, and dedicate more time and effort to progress in this space than ever before.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I've been fortunate to work with some incredible women (and men) in my career. What I have learnt is that there is no one way to lead, and seeing how different leadership can look, I saw that being authentic, finding your own way to lead which is true to you is the key.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Worry less, be brave.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Authenticity, empathy, consistency, passion and drive.

“ There is no one way to lead.”

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My Dad. Integrity, passion, drive, competitive spirit, with a good dose of positivity and humour. And always remembering the most important people are the ones at home.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Creating new ways for people to work in our sector. Purposeful action to improve inclusivity, supporting multiple

careers, non-linear career pathways, flexibility to balance home and work – they can all bring different experience and perspectives to the sector, which in turn will create more innovation and more interesting experiences for our customers as a result too.

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

I studied Human Psychology at University, so possibly a psychologist.



Rachel Wilton

Company **Virgin Atlantic** / Job Title **Vice President of Virgin Atlantic Holidays (Interim)**

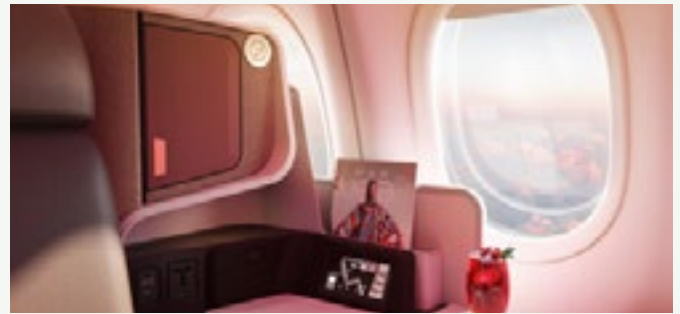


I joined Virgin Atlantic in 2019, starting my career here as a Retail Store Manager. I have always been ambitious, and took on various development and mentoring opportunities, which quickly lead to me being successful in my first senior manager promotion two years later.

I have since headed up several areas while at Virgin Atlantic including our retail estate, supporting the rapid growth expansion and partnerships to further drive revenue, and our call centre where I implemented new technologies and ecommerce, driving our digital-first strategy. I have always endorsed lateral moves to further my skills and expertise in various areas of the business, which then support in further potential promotional opportunities the future.

More recently a promotion to our VP of Global Sales (Interim), leading our global sales teams and strategies lead to my current role, VP of Virgin Atlantic Holidays (Interim) where I'm leading our ambitious growth plans, working with our many partners and customers within the travel industry.

I'm an active part of VAA women in leadership internal programmers, offering support, advice and mentoring to the women in our leadership group, feeling passionate about supporting the development of all women within our industry.



What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I love this industry, and have always had a passion for travel and hospitality since I was little. I have always been ambitious in my career, as I love to travel and to fully immerse myself in our industry, while always looking to further develop myself. I also knew I wanted a family, so needed to ensure I had the right balance and lived my values to achieve both.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

Making a difference where it counts, for our customers, people, and partners. Continuing to drive our industry forward with innovation, and ensuring we listen and act to what our people and customers want and need, whilst ensuring we drive forward sustainability within our sector. I would love to be remembered for this, making a difference where it really matters, while supporting and developing our future talent within the industry.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Living my values while achieving my work and personal goals, and making a difference. Balance is key to ensuring we are successful at both. I always give myself annual work and personal goals, with regular progress reviews thought the year.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Why wouldn't you?! There is so much to this industry. It grows you as an individual and opens doors for you that perhaps you didn't know were there, you really can achieve anything you want with the right determination and effort.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Integrity, empathy, and a growth mindset go without saying but I also value openness and honesty, and a strong development ethos.

QUICKFIRE

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

I have a long work commute (four-and-a-half hour round trip!), and it's great development time. Podcasts or audio books are a massive win for me. *Good to Great* by Jim Collins is a favourite.

Specifically, the flywheel concept!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Sustainable Innovation!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Sir Richard Branson of course!



Julia Winterburn

Company **Forest Holidays** / Job Title **Area Manager**



Travel has always been a natural part of my life and career. After graduating with a degree in Sports and Leisure, I spent the early part of my career in a variety of outdoor activity roles in the USA, Switzerland and Australia before finding my way

back to the UK. After qualifying as a PE teacher, I held a diverse range of roles at leisure clubs, outdoor residential businesses, and in retail in the travel sector. Fueled with a passion for travel and adventure, I laid the foundations for what was to come.

I joined Forest Holidays eleven years ago and my role has organically evolved in line with the growth of the business. With 25 years of experience working in the education, retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors, I have recently embarked on a brand-new chapter as Area Manager. The role merges my operational background with a strategic focus to improve and enhance our guest experience as Forest Holidays continues to grow. Leading our guest activity strategy and team engagement, I'm also responsible for our General Managers and forest locations across the country. My journey to date with Forest Holidays has been one of constant growth, both professionally and personally.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I'm incredibly grateful and honoured to be nominated alongside such talented women in the sector and being part of a collaborative movement to inspire the next generation of our industry.

Reflecting on my career, I've been employed in various industries, and in each role, I have found myself working for a male leader. Having a powerful female leader, whose guidance and insights I could learn from, is something I wish I had experienced throughout my professional life.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I often find myself wishing I had taken more risks throughout my career, rather than listening to the inner voice that suggested I was underqualified or not good enough. My advice? Embrace every opportunity that comes your way – ignore self-doubt, and just GO FOR IT.

What first inspired you into a career in retail?

I started out in retail at 16 years old as a Saturday employee. A year later I had progressed to the role of store supervisor before being given the opportunity to oversee a diverse team.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

There are so many influential women that have inspired me, but if I had to pick one it would be the Queen. Her unwavering commitment, exemplary leadership and dedication to public service make her a timeless role model, inspiring people around the world with her devotion to her role and responsibilities.

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

Empowering disadvantaged young people through sports

and outdoor activities, to help them gain skills and realise their own potential. I also strongly believe that by fostering these talents early on, we can address and prevent anti-social behaviors and play a part in changing someone's life path.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Joe Simpson (Touching the Void), Mountaineer. What a truly inspirational person with an epic true story to tell, who remains humble despite the fame it has brought him.

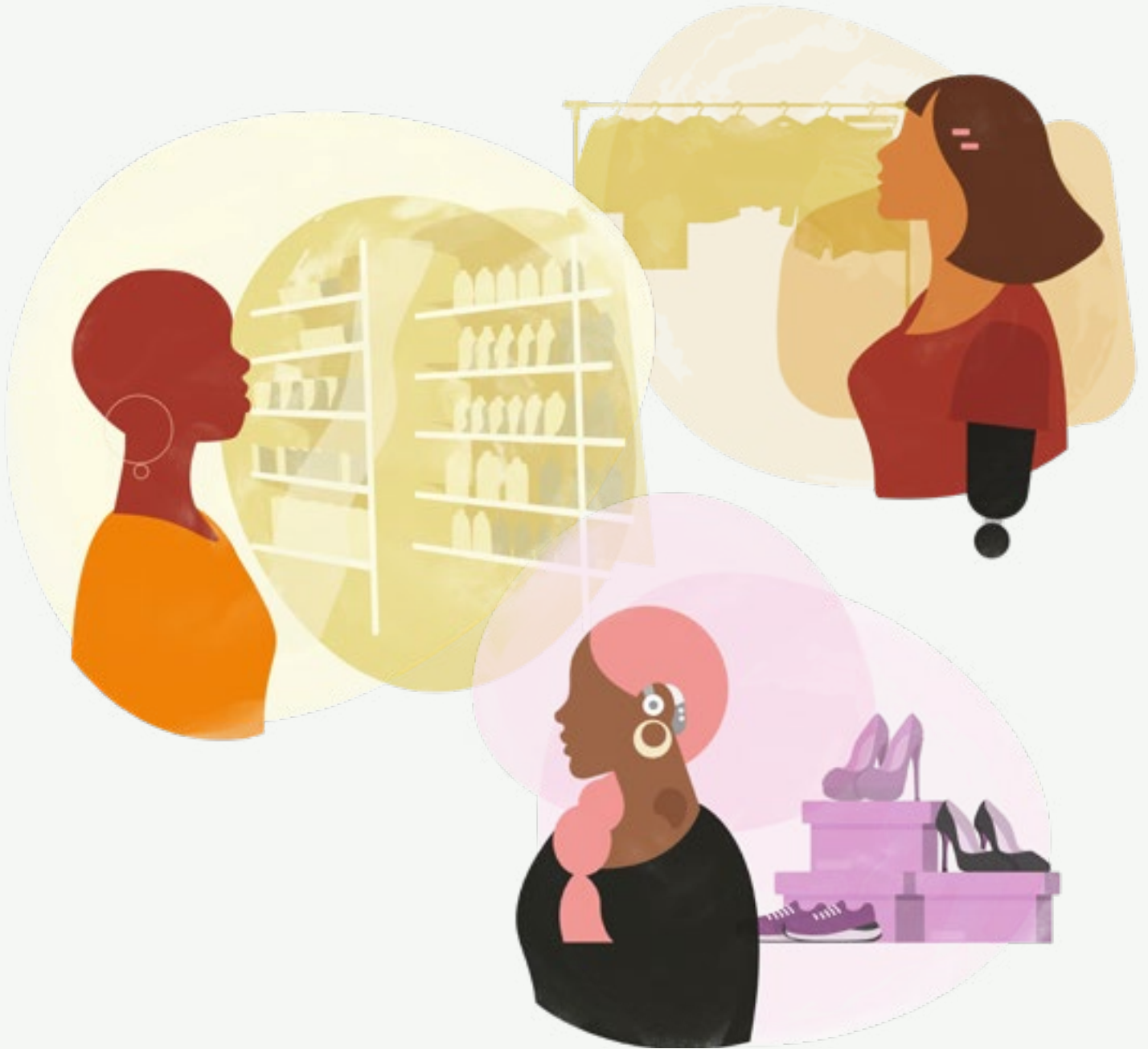


This early career experience taught me that age and gender are irrelevant. Work hard and believe in yourself and you'll get to where you want to be.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Pursue it wholeheartedly; view this industry as a true career path, not just a stepping stone and you won't regret it.

“ Having a powerful female leader, whose guidance and insights I could learn from, is something I wish I had experienced throughout my professional life.



Women to Watch in Retail

Inspirational leaders from
across the industry

This chapter highlights and celebrates distinguished women in the retail sector. These women have been selected for their forward-thinking leadership; their contribution to their sector; their impact on their communities; and their commercial

acumen. This Index is proof of the plethora of women role models that exist in the sector, and we hope the publication will inspire ambitious women considering a role in retail, or those looking to progress in their careers.



CJ Antal-Smith

Company Halfords / Job Title Group Commercial Director, Halfords Garages



I always thought I would be a lawyer. I finished university and joined the Asda Graduate Scheme, thinking I would only do it to pay my student loans off and then pursue a career in law. However, I had so much fun and learned so much in the three years I was on the scheme

I decided retail was something I wanted to continue building a career in and never looked back! I learnt that I was passionate about finding and delivering collaborative solutions that were commercially sustainable in the world of complex supply chains, whilst developing talent in my teams. I have held leadership roles in various sectors including retail, hospitality and the service industry. This includes buying and category director roles at Asda, the Co-op Food business as Trading Director for Grocery, Non-Food and Beers, Wines and Spirits and then as the CCO for Funeral Care. I also held a position at Nando's UK and Ireland where I helped to establish and build the commercial team, implementing more efficient ways of working, new menu design and creating supplier strategies. Currently I am Group Commercial Director for Halfords Garages, a role that is providing a lot of opportunity in a complex sector, with great people and lots to learn! I love to mentor and develop new talent within different businesses, working with new concepts and teams to deliver innovative and successful solutions. Outside of work I have two teenage children that keep me busy, and I love to travel, try new foods, cook and keep fit.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

Being able to highlight women leaders in sectors that still have a male dominance is helpful to ensure mentoring, guidance and training is prioritised by companies. It demonstrates that women do have a network of sponsors and provides the inspiration to show them that women are gaining jobs not due to diversity and inclusion, but because they are the best talent for the jobs they hold and are more than capable of achieving success.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me is being able to get teams to work under the 'one team' mentality and to feel psychologically safe. Seeing people under your stewardship further their careers and grow in confidence means I have done a good job as a leader or mentor.

“ I would give my younger self the confidence to 'fail fast'.”

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I have been lucky enough to work with many amazing women in my career and would name Judith McKenna, Jo Whitfield, Helen Webb and Emma Fox as all being inspiring role models and mentors in my career.

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

The first step in solving a problem is the recognition and acceptance that there is one!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Audrey Hepburn. She was iconic and so beautiful yet elegant and poised. Her famous quote "nothing is impossible, the word itself says possible" resonates with me and my tenacity.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would give my younger self the confidence to 'fail fast', take the learnings and move forward in my earlier career without being afraid of pushing outside of my comfort zone. Knowing I won't always have the answers and knowing my blind spots. Also, to be a bit more patient in terms of achieving my goals and to bring people with me whilst always being humble.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The most valuable lesson I have learned is to surround myself with critical friends and to accept and value feedback. The pace of change within retail has never been so fast as today, so agility and being prepared to change direction with the shifting landscape of markets is crucial to success, along with an understanding that the customer is always number one.



Salma Azad

Company **IKEA** / Job Title **Area manager**



I have worked at IKEA for almost 18 years, in a career that has always centered me around delivering the business through people. I have worked in many different markets, across different areas of the business and grown through all my leadership positions.

Being a leader in IKEA and the role I do today, leading the South Region as an Area Manager, comes with great freedom and responsibility. I feel extremely privileged to lead the region and have the ambition to not only support coworkers but also inspire and share my experiences, to allow them to pursue their own journey in IKEA.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My father has been my role model and is very influential in my life. He has always shown great resilience, moving to the UK and building both a life for my family as well as his own business. He is extremely entrepreneurial

and I'm sure I get my ambition and drive from him!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Digital innovation and greater experiential retailing!

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in retail?

In retail, creating a truly inclusive environment can be extremely challenging. There is a huge need for greater diversity and visibility in leadership roles, addressing unconscious biases in decision-making and enhancing training programmes for deeper knowledge and understanding. We need to embrace cultural sensitivity, which is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere where everyone feels they have the same opportunities and can be their own true self. As a leader in IKEA, I encourage and value diversity and I am an ambassador for a truly inclusive workplace.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

There are lots! I would say to embrace learning and understand that failing and making mistakes is part of the process and can sometimes teach you more! I would be kinder to myself, try to bounce back from set backs quicker, and believe in my ability a lot more. Lastly be proud of the differences I bring and always show up as my true self.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me connects to many things, starting with building relationships, it involves meeting and then exceeding goals, having a strong work ethic, and prioritising ongoing learning. I believe

communication and teamwork are essential for creating a positive work environment. As a leader I am not only focused on achieving my own goals, but I am also driven to support others to grow and develop and seeing them have their own success is extremely rewarding!

“ We need to embrace cultural sensitivity, which is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere.

What do you predict for the future of retail?

Looking ahead in retail, I see a big focus on digital transformation and personalised customer experiences. With the blending of online and offline retail we need to work harder than ever to attract customers with a strong reason to visit, meeting the growing demand for a comprehensive omnichannel approach. Customer expectations continue to grow and as we move forward, adaptability and flexibility will be paramount for sustained success in the ever-evolving retail landscape with sustainability playing a huge role in business. We are being challenged to retain good talent, creating work environments that are flexible and fit for the future.



Sinead Bell

Company Co-op / Job Title Commercial Director, Co-op Food Group



“All I want is a shop with a till”, I’m told, was the wish at the top of my childhood Christmas list. My family therefore are not surprised that I’ve gravitated towards retail later in life, though with some relief I’ve stopped selling their own possessions back to

them at a mark-up! This wasn’t always the case: leisure, consulting and food manufacturing came first. The common thread which has fascinated me throughout is discovering what it is that makes the customer tick.



QUICKFIRE

What is the most interesting thing you’ve read, watched or heard recently?

I managed to bag tickets to *Dear England* before the run ended. The narrative that bravely forging a new direction for others can only come about if you confront your own self-doubt was a compelling watch. I defy anyone to leave not feeling inspired, and not be rooting for England to win in 2024!

If you weren’t working in retail, what would you be doing?

I’d teach Maths. I’m a geek at heart who enjoys finding

stories in numbers and sharing that curiosity with others would be a happy job for sure.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The convergence of AI powered technology with the shift of customers towards ever more authentic and ethical products and propositions.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Gene Kelly. The best parties end with dancing and it would be amazing to be part of the joy of recreating that scene from *Singin’ in the Rain*.

“The next frontier is the development of truly neurodiverse workplaces and I’m convinced this will be best achieved with collaboration amongst peers and sectors.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

Whilst there is still more to do, and always will be, it is important to reflect on progress. When I started out, the topic of EDI was narrow in scope and education was limited. As inclusion has rightfully gained a greater share of voice and plans, there has been a shift from fringe to fundamental. An example in Co-op is that EDI is a pre-requisite of our terms of business, representing a core facet of supplier-partner selection with equal weighting alongside all other aspects of a commercial deal. The next frontier is the development of truly neurodiverse workplaces and I’m convinced this will be best achieved with collaboration amongst peers and sectors.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I have been fortunate to have worked with some fantastic companies at critical life-stages packed

with inspirational leaders. Three role models stand out with whom I feel privileged to have worked with closely: Kari Daniels as the first female supermarket CEO, Joanna Jensen whose founding of Childs Farm changed the lives of millions babies and toddlers, and most recently Shirine Khoury-Haq, the first female Group CEO at Co-op. As well as demonstrating that everything is possible, their energy and passion has been inspiring and each has encouraged me to be my authentic self.

What would you like to be remembered for?

The two favourite things in my role is seeing people and supplier-partners reach their full potential as well as winning as part of a team with a big heart. When I step into retirement – hopefully filled with wilderness, wine and wildlife travel! – how amazing would it be to have paid this enjoyment forward to others, and have provided them the conditions to thrive.

Karen Bellairs

Company **Halfords** / Job Title **Chief Customer and Commercial Officer**



I've spent 25 years in consumer facing businesses. Following my degree which included a marketing placement at BAA Stansted, I joined Dixons with the opportunity to work in Dublin expanding Currys retail offer into the ROI.

Moving to Powerhouse, then the biggest independent electrical retailer, I grew buying skills to complement my product management experience.

Much of my career has been at Halfords, working in a breadth of diverse roles starting out trading a category, to being appointed their youngest-ever female executive. I've been responsible for leading marketing and digital transformations, driving commercial P&Ls and spearheading our customer strategy into the heart of Halfords' DNA. Customer-centric commercial delivery is always at the core of everything I do. Today Halfords has strategically evolved from a product retailer to a services brand with garages and mobile vans a huge part of our customer offer. I've loved leading this journey. I'm proud to support the British Heart Foundation as a member of their Retail Committee.



What first inspired you into a career in retail?

I did several retail jobs from a young age, in a pet shop initially and then at Boots. I was immediately hooked, enjoying the customer interaction, learning the offer and the team camaraderie. My inspiration has continued throughout my career, if I were to boil it down, it's the impact a retailer has on customer behaviours that motivates me. Bringing products and services to consumers that

bring joy, help fix problems and make memories. At Halfords it's so rewarding to know we are helping keep the nation moving in their cars. Equally wonderful thinking about the hundreds of thousands of children waking up to one of our bikes on Christmas morning.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

The principle of just saying yes. Putting your hand up.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I've been lucky to work for many wonderful leaders and had fantastic peers and teams to also inspire me and learn from. However, I think in truth the role model that has made the biggest difference is my Mum – she taught me work ethic and gave me my drive. She helped my two sisters and me all find our own paths – all very different but all unlocking our individual talents and potential.

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

I've started listening to a daily podcast called *10 minute MBA* – it's literally 10 mins or less and offers actionable business lessons with insights, tools and strategies.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

AI will be game changing for the sector, primarily at unlocking efficiencies but balancing investment in the human touch will be absolutely key in parallel, to ensure retail and service interactions remain empathetic and add value to the brand experience.

Not only will you learn, develop expertise and experience but you will demonstrate to leaders valuable assets of tenacity and drive.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

To smile and laugh more and worry less, not just to avoid frown lines! But because positivity is infectious, and the feeling of happiness is a choice. Equally, if you want something then ask for it, don't just expect someone to guess or work it out. Don't feel afraid or shy to be proactive, and after all the worst response is no.

What do you predict for the future of retail?

Relevance is crucial, meaning retailers must remain agile and ambitious to keep pace with evolving

“ If you want something then ask for it, don't just expect someone to guess or work it out.

technology and growing customer expectations. Customer experience will remain more important than ever with brands focusing on retention as much as acquisition taking the lead. Offering value, transparency, and sustainability will be vital. Businesses that have invested in strong data and personalisation can use artificial intelligence, arguably the biggest disruptor since online, to take further competitive advantage.

Lorna Billinge

Company **Qurate Retail Group** / Job Title **SVP, Operations & Global Supply Chain**



I am a wife and mother of three boys, as well as a grandmother of three girls and one boy. After leaving my first job in retail, I supported my husband by doing all of the administration for his own business, which I enjoyed until it started to encroach on our personal

life. I missed working in the retail sector so when I saw a Packer job advertised for QVC UK I decided to apply. (I actually never got to pack, as they wanted someone in the Inventory admin team and felt my skills were a better fit... just as well, as I am an awful packer!)

I worked my way up within the inventory control function, doing several other roles along the way. After reaching the supervisor role in inventory, I then was promoted into the Returns Manager role and then to a Senior Operations role, where I was responsible for the fulfilment centre in the UK. I then led inbound supply chain and quality assurance globally, when I was asked to move to the US to lead the fulfilment centers, contact centers and systems implementations. I have been leading this team for two years in the US and recently returned to the UK where I serve as SVP, Operations & Global Supply Chain for Qurate Retail Group. Come April 2024, I will have been with the organisation for 28 years.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mum is my role model; she was a single mum for part of my childhood, and she taught me what it was to be a strong independent woman. She never let anything stop her from doing something she wanted to do – even cancer didn't stop her. I became a mother at 16 and my mum supported and guided me through the judgement and challenges I faced.

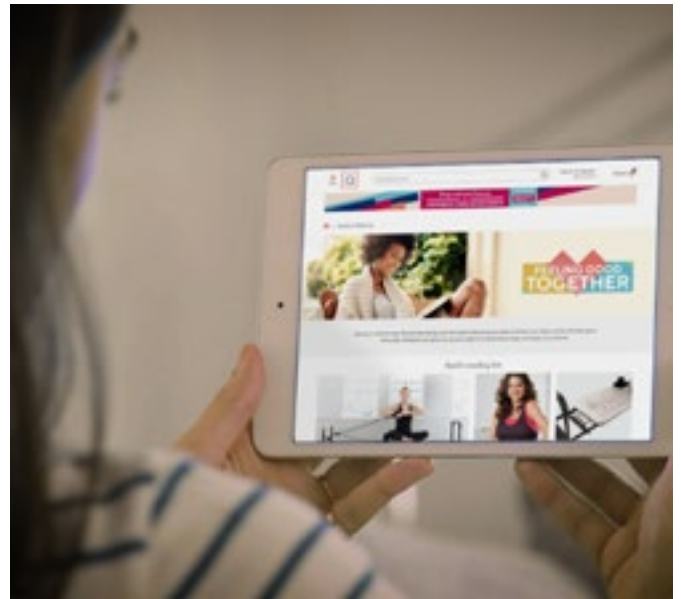
What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Where the customer is

going to take us, and how new technology is going to support that. I really am excited about what AI can do for us, but more importantly, how this interacts with the human touch.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

It would be my family and friends. I know this sounds boring but when I was away from home and living in the US, all I wanted was to have my family and friends around me. It's what is most important to me, they make me laugh, they are entertaining, and I love them all.



What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me is when I help someone to spread their wings and fly, whether that be personally or professionally. I have three sons who are successful; they have all taken very different career paths but as a parent you nurture them to be independent. Another is when you have team members who want to progress, and you can successfully support them to a point where they're able to move on in the business or even leave the business for a bigger role. This for me is so satisfying, as both you and the team member feel successful. Coaching and mentoring takes a lot of hard work but it's worth it to see the success.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learnt in your career?

Never put things off that are important to a team member. I once had a situation where a team

member brought an issue to me around pay. I listened to their concerns and knew it was important to them. However, I put it off as it wasn't my priority and I was more concerned about what my boss wanted at the time. As I learnt over time, the priority should have always been to serve my team members first. This really resonated with me – it happened to me over 20 years ago and I still remember it today.

“ Coaching takes a lot of hard work, but it's worth it to see the success.

What advice would you give your younger self?

I would tell myself not to worry about being judged for who you are – which was a challenge for me as a woman in a male-dominated environment.



Sara Bradley

Company **N Brown** / Job Title **Group Buying Director**



I joined N Brown as Group Buying Director in 2022, leading the buying teams across the portfolio of brands, which include JD Williams, Simply Be, and Jacamo.

I have over 20 years' experience in the fashion industry and have held senior leadership positions

at Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and George at Asda. I began my career at the Arcadia Group where I worked my way up to become the Buying Director at Dorothy Perkins. Prior to joining N Brown, I was Womenswear Trading Director at Debenhams.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

Throughout my career I've worked for some amazing women leaders, but only recently have they been at Board level. There are still very few at the top, but they are the powerhouse in the industry and deserve to be seen and heard.

We've come a long way, but there is more to do in D&I of all kinds.

I'm proud to work for such an inclusive retailer. D&I is part of N Brown's overall strategy and long term vision of the business,

which I believe is key for success. Our colleague communities are driving real change, and we have a dedicated Women and Allies community supporting women in our business, as well as a mentoring scheme to help develop future female leaders.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

The impact of some of the role models in my career cannot be underestimated. They have, and still do, inspire me to keep looking

QUICKFIRE

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

Very recent, but I loved the *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*. An incredible true story that was so moving.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I honestly can't imagine doing anything else. I love this industry.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Can I have two? The pace of change and impact of tech developments. It's exciting. And then there's the developments taking

place to make the industry more sustainable that will help us continue to do a better job for the planet.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

A tricky choice given she passed away in 1971, but I'd have to say Gabrielle Chanel. She was a woman who was way ahead of her time and who did what she needed to do to get ahead and forge her own path at a time when so few women did or could. Chanel achieved so much: she was an innovator, a creator and a true icon – one dinner would not be enough but would be incredible.

forwards and upwards, keep learning and to trust my instincts.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Make sure you have great talent around you.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Working with great people, enjoying what I do and being able to be proud of the outcomes.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

It's an amazing industry that can give you so many

wonderful life experiences and will keep you interested and challenged as it's constantly changing. It's also relentless so make sure you stay fit and ultimately enjoy it!

There's also so many opportunities within retail, and they're open to anyone, regardless of background. N Brown is committed to developing the talent of the future. As part of this we're partnered with The Prince's Trust and recently hosted a group of young people for a week long work experience to give them a taste of what it's like to work in fashion and digital retail.



Caroline Browne

Company **Watches of Switzerland Group** / Job Title **Group Finance and Investor Relations Director**



I have been with the WOS Group for five years now and was initially brought in to help the Group ready itself for IPO. Over my time here we have more than doubled sales and profits, expanded internationally and completed a number of acquisitions. I am responsible for all areas

of finance and investor relations. During my career I have spent time in audit both in the UK and Australia. Having returned to the UK, I moved to Boots where I ran the management accounting team, led the Sarbanes-Oxley implementation and finally headed the Finance Shared Service Centre of over 100 people. My career then took me to Next where I was Group Financial Controller before moving onto WOS. I am also Trustee and Audit & Risk Committee Chair for War Child UK and the newly formed War Child Alliance. These INGOs help children in conflict areas such as Gaza, Ukraine and Yemen. This year I had the privilege to go out to the DRC, a country under conflict with over 6 million people displaced, to help with their work on the ground. As a mum of two mixed race boys, championing diversity is something that is really close to my heart.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Being a leader isn't about being in charge. It is about nurturing and developing those around you to deliver for a common goal. To be a good leader you need to inspire others, paint the picture of the long-term vision for the team to get behind and support them to deliver their best.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

There are actually couple for me. The first would be that you can't be the best at everything. You need to understand what you are good at, develop your strengths and make them a real differentiator

and then build a diverse team around you who are good at the things that you are not.

The second would be that when times are tough you learn the most. We all go through challenges and difficult times in our careers, but those challenges build your resilience and ultimately add to your experience bank, helping you in the rest of your career.

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

I am so pleased to be part of the Woman to Watch in Retail Index this year. There are so many inspirational women featured again and it just shows the amount of female talent

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Zarifa Ghafari who is women's rights campaigner in Afghanistan. She was the first and only female Mayor in the country before the Taliban re-took control when she was only 24. I am in awe of her bravery in fighting for what she believes in and for the sake of her country in incredibly dangerous circumstances.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I think I would be working in finance in another sector, but it wouldn't be anywhere near as interesting.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

I would love to have Gillian Anderson as my dinner party guest. Not only is she an amazing actress but she is also an entrepreneur, activist and gives a lot of her time to charities. I love her approach to women's freedoms.

out there. I think it is so important to showcase that talent to inspire the future generations. Being included is also a personal reminder to me of the role I need to play in inspiring, supporting and developing others in their careers.

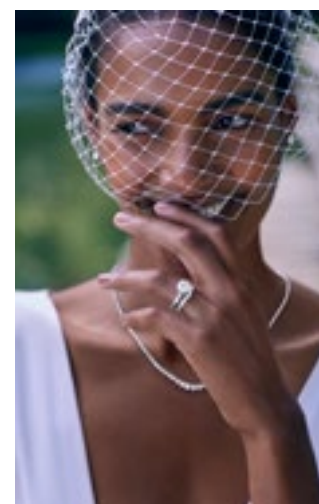
What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I have been fortunate to have worked with some amazing people in my career. From my first roles in finance where I witnessed some truly inspirational women partners carving their way through what was a male-dominated leadership structure at that time.

At Next, I learned a lot from Amanda James, a brilliant CFO who started her career at Next straight out of school and worked her way up to the top.

At WOS we have some many great female leaders, but we are particularly fortunate to have Tea Colaiani on our Board who is a force of change in this industry.

All of these people have shown me that you can succeed, and you can succeed your way, inspiring me and others to kick on.



Selina Butterfield-Mashoofi

Company Central Co-op / Job Title Chief Financial Officer



After ACA qualifying, I have spent a thoroughly enjoyable career to date immersed in retail with rich leadership experiences across Amazon, Burberry, Very, start-ups and now, Central Co-op. My father ran a toy company which set early roots for a love

of product and customer and the enabling requirement for both self-awareness and a versatile toolkit. I centre on inclusive, high-performance cultures and continuous improvement journeys with the teams that I lead, with the intent of creating environments where we can deliver robust financial performance, positively impact the communities that we operate in and allow individuals to flourish.

I am proudly a champion of the virtuous benefits of community to drive innovation, belonging and development. This includes being Board Advisor for GEN CFO to develop the finance leaders of tomorrow, founding committee member for Nova which drives Women in Leadership, and a founding member of WHiTL DiR CFO Committee. I had a sporty start to life which fast forward to today means hillside hiking, horse riding or finessing a recent Yoga teacher qualification. I'm fascinated by the capability of people which drives my podcast listening list, a lengthy list of mentees, and an interminable interest in watching my three children grow.

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

It is not about me but the potential in everyone. It means helping people reach their goals, and enabling the steps on the path to success go from unclear to visible, visible to well-trodden, and eventually become a path that goes further. What a privilege to be part of this celebration of wonderful women on a journey of positive impact, with intent to make a difference.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I value leaders with ears and eyes open to all the diversity within their teams, adaptive styles, humility, and conviction. I always look out for their specific super strength in which they can showcase individual brilliance and mastery. It's such a wonderful source of learning.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me is intrinsically linked to fulfilment. It is multi-faceted and has become

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Both my grandmothers; neither are unfortunately still with us, but both were strong, very different women with deep values who created a following. One was highly intelligent, tenacious and would take on anything that was not right and the second highly resourceful, never to be underestimated, deeply family focused with an infectious giggle to her final years.

If you were not working in retail, what would you be doing?

I like taking out barriers and creating friction-free approaches, so in an alternative world I would be in technology,

furthering whizzy software that disrupts sectors or allows all who desire access to become an entrepreneur.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

It is a tie between ever-evolving approaches to delight customers, and how businesses will face the productivity squeeze. At Central Co-op, one of our core values is cooperation and I envisage more businesses will need to work together to exist and thrive, so combining functions, technology or customer dreams which will create new answers. If these answers can start to face into societal issues too, incredible.

more nuanced as I have learnt and grown. It involves being present and showing gratitude, being honest to your values and kind when the intent is right even if the path has a wiggle. It means putting a stake in the ground and standing for something; both in what you want to achieve and importantly the guardrails of what is not acceptable.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

"Control the controllables" and "You have got to be in the ring". I come back to both frequently; the first really focuses attention on what matters most and where your impact can be felt. The second reminds me not to wait for opportunity; an intent unshared is simply a secret!



Lisa Camm

Company Fortnum & Mason / Job Title Head of Digital Transformation



I had promised my parents that I would have a 'back-up plan' should I not be offered a place at drama school. In 2008, I switched my aspirations from drama school and started studying Computer Information Systems at the University of Bath. My peers were going

to technology and finance companies, but I was keen to explore something different. There was an opportunity at Burberry that seemed a perfect fit, allowing me to combine my love of fashion and shopping with technology. My time there kick-started my career and I feel extremely lucky to have been part of a team delivering many digital 'firsts' in retail. It was clear technology was pivotal to driving retailers' success and connecting with customers. Throughout my career, I have continued to work in luxury retail (including Harvey Nichols and Fortnum & Mason) within dynamic teams evolving the future customer experience and supporting the business with leading technology infrastructure.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Sign-up for a mentor programme! Through the WiHTL & DiR programme (my first formal mentoring programme), I was assigned an external mentor. Ahead of meeting my mentor, I spent time challenging myself on what I wanted to get out of our sessions. Having a mentor has pushed me to focus on my development including the creation of a personal brand table and a focus on self-awareness as a leader.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

A couple of years ago, I watched a series called New Amsterdam, a medical drama that follows a doctor as he becomes the medical director of a hospital. As he progresses with his career, he prioritises his team and when they faced challenges, his first question was always 'how can I help?' While the story is fiction, the respect he earned from his team and how he empowered, inspired, and supported them really stuck with me and are characteristics I often look for in leaders.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Ask for forgiveness, not permission. While I believe that visibility and requesting permission is a great way to cultivate a culture where accountability, collaboration and responsibility are valued, there are exceptions to this, like when you need to make a rapid decision. I've quite often heard this phrase thrown around in the workplace and there have been situations where this advice has been well met. I would recommend to anyone reading this to be pragmatic and strike the right balance in live and pressurised situations.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me has changed over the years, from focussing on climbing the corporate ladder, to being able to balance this with my personal life. This year I bought my first property with my fiancé, and we have a wedding to plan and look forward to!

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Angela Ahrendts. Angela was the first senior female executive leader I had met in my career. On the day she announced her resignation at Burberry, her and Christopher did a floor walk. I have never forgotten the presence she had during that floor walk. I've continued to follow her career and look at where I can learn from her.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Likely working at an investment bank, partnering between business teams and their software application/development team.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Elon Musk. While some of his opinions and actions might be up for debate, he has incredible vision of and for the future.



Sarah Clark

Company **lululemon** / Job Title **Senior Vice President, EMEA**



I joined lululemon in September September 2022 as Senior Vice President of EMEA, leading the brand's strategic growth and development in the region.

I have held several C-Suite positions at mid-sized organisations. Most recently, I served as Chief

Executive Officer at Frugi Group, a portfolio of ethical brands spanning organic childrenswear, reusable nappies and reusable feminine hygiene, leading the expansion of the brand into new markets, such as the US.

At OKA, a 20-year-old British furniture brand, I served as Chief Commercial Officer and spearheaded the evolution of the brand, the digital growth of the business and the international expansion plans into the US. I also spent six years at Rapha Racing, a dominant and fast-growing UK cycling brand, as Chief Commercial Officer overseeing all commercial channels and logistics and led the growth of the company into Asia, as well as the successful sale of the company to the Walton family.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

At lululemon, our mission is to elevate human potential by helping people feel their best – and that starts with our people. Our core values underpin everything we do, and at the heart of them is inclusion – which I am especially passionate about.

Having spent most of my career intersecting with retail in some way, and as one of few women in a leadership position,

Of' programme designed to help ensure equitable leadership and career development opportunities across the company for self-identifying BIWOC (Black, Indigenous, Women of Color). The programme is designed with the aim to cultivate community, expand networking opportunities, empower storytelling, visioning, healing, and goal setting; and to engage the allies who directly support and surround this cohort of participants.

“ If you start on the frontline, you will learn so much about your customer, and these insights are a powerful accelerator for every part of the business.

QUICKFIRE

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

I like to concurrently read fiction and non-fiction. Two highlights of late would be *The Salt Path* by Raynor Winn, which is an incredible true story of a couple who lose everything and walk the South-West coastline to rediscover meaning. Having lived in Cornwall, the book had a special meaning for me.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I love the outdoors and am a keen cyclist and horse-

rider. I also love travel and was fortunate to tick a few countries off my bucket-list this year. If I weren't in retail, I would love to open a business in adventure travel. I even have the name ready: 'The Indirect Flight Club'. I have always found that places that take a bit more effort to get to can be an unspoiled haven of natural wonders. I certainly found this when I visited Kyrgyzstan and Tusheti, Georgia last year.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

There are many I could choose... one would certainly be David Bowie.

I appreciate that retail can be an intimidating environment where behaviours of exclusion could be regularly demonstrated. As a younger woman in my 20s, I certainly experienced this at times whilst representing brands during visits to various UK retailers.

I feel very proud to be in a new era, working for a business that champions equity. We have a commitment to elevate women across the business, and as it stands, approximately 75% of our workforce, 70% of our senior leaders, and 50% of our Board comprise of women, globally.

In addition, last year, we launched our 'Women

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

As you progress in your career, a tough learning is that not everyone is always going to like you, and for most people, regardless of personality type, this can be difficult to reconcile.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

I would say go for it! It's an amazing industry and has so much to offer. If you start on the frontline, you will learn so much about your customer, and these insights are a powerful accelerator for every part of the business.

Zahra Coggins

Company WHSmith / Job Title Space & Format Development Director



I have enjoyed an incredibly varied 25-year retail career. Post a Law degree I joined the Marks & Spencer Graduate scheme as a Commercial Graduate. I spent 15 years working across regional store management, store development, as well as living and working

in Dublin managing the expansion programme. I then spent five years in the John Lewis Partnership in Grocery and food to go trading and proposition development delivering new formats such as Little Waitrose.

I joined WHSmith Travel in 2016 and after various leadership roles in trading, I am now the Space & Format Development Director across our travel and healthcare estate. This is a fascinating role which has multiple touchpoints across the business. It includes customer insight; building the travel strategy; developing new formats; store layouts, and how we maximise profit from our use of space. My team operate across our international and UK Stores, and we really enjoy understanding the customer behaviors across the variety of markets we operate in.

Outside of my day job, I am the founding co-chair of the Gender Equity Network. This has really opened my eyes on what DE&I means to different people. As a mother of three teenage boys and a full-time career, I *thought* I had a good understanding of many of the challenges. The Gender Network experiences have shown me how much more there is to learn and understand outside my personal experiences.

“ I see this as an ongoing responsibility on my part to help others thrive in their careers.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector

25 years in retail is a long time, but I can see a change in desire and commitment to have diversity of thinking. I

remember making a flexible working request after my return to work following my third son. This was rejected and I ultimately moved on from the business as a result. I see the flexibility we offer parents returning to work now, which reflects the positive mindset change.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

It's easy to be in a rush for the next promotion and constantly comparing yourself to your peers

QUICKFIRE

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

I've just finished binge watching *Happy Valley*. I would highly recommend it!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

William Shakespeare.

Not something I loved at school, but I've learned to appreciate the breadth of his work as I've got older...

Who is your role model?

My mother. Looking back, her challenging of cultural expectations that existed in my formative years was more important than I could have realised at the time.

and their progression. But there may be points in your career where you need to take a sideways move to a new function to gain breadth of experience.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

Even though we are seeing a shift, women CEOs, CFOs and Chairs are still the minority and that is not representative of the customer base. Highlighting women leaders who have been able to progress will inspire others to achieve their ambitions and lean into opportunities. I also feel that the role men can play should also be celebrated. I have worked with some fantastic leaders who

have facilitated my growth through their allyship.

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

It is such an honour and privilege to have been nominated. I see this as an ongoing responsibility on my part to help others thrive in their careers. I don't think this is necessarily about being a role model for others, that's personal to others based on their circumstances, but more about demonstrating role modelling behaviours that others can pick and choose from. I have learnt so much from picking up tips and tricks from others, but then delivering in a style that is authentically mine.



Julia Cove-Smith

Company Emma Bridgewater / Job Title Chief Executive Officer



My interest in retail started with my sixth form Saturday job at a gift shop in my local town, followed by a short (and not very successful) stint at the local butchers! After graduating from Cambridge University, I joined the WHSmith graduate scheme, with the

chance to experience retail operations and buying, and working in the CEO's office. I found myself most at home in the marketing department, which led to a role running the WHSmith travel marketing team. From there I moved to be Head of Marketing at Waterstone's, and launched the Waterstone's Loyalty Card. A chance conversation with a local friend led to a 6-month contract setting up the marketing team at Emma Bridgewater, which progressed into a permanent project, and a move to a wider role, before becoming CEO in 2015. I love the varied nature of the business, and the fact that our customers care so much about the brand, feel hugely invested and give us so much feedback. We make our products in Stoke-on-Trent, the heart of the potteries, and sell it via multiple channels. In 2022, we were delighted to build on Emma's original vision for the business and become an accredited B Corp.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

It's important to highlight women leaders in all walks of life, but particularly in retail businesses where so many people working or shopping there are women. Seeing other women in your own industry really helps to see opportunities for your own development, and gives you confidence in your own ability as you progress. Having female voices around the table making decisions in any business is so important.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in retail? How can we overcome them?

As with many industries, long and inflexible working hours make it hard for some

“ Whatever your skill set, you can probably find an appropriate role somewhere in a retail business.

women with families or other caring responsibilities to work in retail – although things have definitely improved.

What first inspired you into a career in retail?

I sort of fell into retail because it seemed like something tangible where you could make a difference and have an impact quite early on in your career. I was inspired by the first Shop General Manager I worked for who was a

QUICKFIRE

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The genuine move to reviewing the impact of the industry on the environment, and the exciting new businesses or services this is starting to deliver.

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

Mr Bates vs The Post Office.

If you weren't working in Retail, what would you be doing?

Teaching PE.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Michelle Obama.

brilliant leader. She was hugely commercial and professional, and totally focused on customer service.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Always listen fully to customers and your team before making a final decision – and make the space for everyone in the business to have a voice. Make bold decisions when sales are going well, and don't forget sometimes it's the strength of the market that's helping you, not just your strong strategy. But this works both ways, and when trading is tough you also need to stay focused and remember you're doing lots of things right.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Go for it! There's such a great variety of jobs in retail businesses – with plenty of opportunities



to move around and work in different departments. Whatever your skill set, you can probably find an appropriate role somewhere in a retail business.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I work well with leaders who value and respect their teams and give them space to make decisions and take actions, but support them when necessary. I also value leaders with a strong sense of doing what's right, not necessarily taking the easiest option, but recognising what's the right thing to do, for the employees, the business and the customers.



Ruth Cranston

Company Sainsbury's / Job Title Director of Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability



I joined Sainsbury's in 2010 as a graduate where I spent a good chunk of time on the shop floor learning about the wonderful world of food retailing. Since then, I've had amazing opportunities from leading Christmas campaigns, progressing our charitable partnership

work and delivering our CRM & Loyalty strategy and the digitisation of our Nectar scheme. This brings me to today where for the last 3 years, I have had the incredible pleasure and privilege of leading our group sustainability strategy in our efforts to drive better outcomes for planet, people and business. Retail has provided me with such a challenging and rewarding career and I'm proud everyday to be part of a business that puts purpose at the heart of everything we do.



QUICKFIRE

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

I watched a documentary recently on 'Blue Zones' which featured 5 communities across the world who have the highest number of centenarians. The blue zone secrets were about diet, movement and community/connection

and there were so many tips which I thought were important for anyone who has a busy working life and is trying to find balance.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

It would definitely still be working in food. Perhaps working with my local food charity or finding a way to launch my own food business!

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

Food is at the centre of all of our lives, but the reality is that the food system faces many challenges from climate change impacts to biodiversity loss to how we solve the issues of obesity and growing rates of food poverty. So the system needs improving and we need to show that good food can be joyful, affordable and accessible for everyone. I want to be remembered for being part of driving this change with my team, our business and the wider industry.

“ Create the environment and culture where there's not a 'one size fits all' approach to people and talent.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

What stands out for me are leaders who have the ability to:

- Create the environment and culture where there's not a 'one size fits all' approach to people and talent.
- Focus relentlessly on removing the barriers and blockers which enable their teams to flourish.

- Make the tough short term decisions which are right for now but also support a long term vision.
- Be vulnerable – we're all human, we make mistakes, we need support and I've always admired those who are open and honest particularly with their teams.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Quite simply, ask for help. In the early part of my career I saw asking for help as a weakness and a failing that I couldn't deliver something or work out the answer myself. In reality, asking for help is the key to the best work and outcomes. It brings diversity of thought, new inspiration and great results but just as importantly it brings support and connection which is what we all need to succeed.

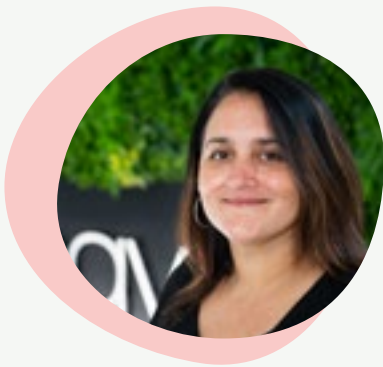
What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Retail is a place with endless opportunities. So for the next generation of female leaders, I'd say be curious and open minded as you begin your career as there's potential to find roles you never could've imagined. I've also found that I've been able to be brave and take risks because I've had a supportive leader who has often believed in me before I've believed in myself. So make sure you find your support and take that risk or opportunity!



Emma Dinnis

Company **Sofology** / Job Title **Managing Director**



I have more than 25 years of leadership experience across the retail industry, having worked with some of the UK's largest retailers including Marks and Spencer, IKEA, Arcadia Group and M&Co. I have a huge energy for building a company culture driven by purpose and passion. My experience

propelling businesses by transforming the customer journey lifecycle, from awareness to loyalty, alongside my passion for defining brands' individuality, has seen growth and innovation within the businesses I've been a part of. My passion for leading the way for change within diversity and inclusion has seen me sponsor women's networks to ensure a constant conversation around gender imbalance, acting as a voice to acknowledge issues and propel awareness.

QUICKFIRE

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Either in advertising – I love a clever advert – or I'd be a helicopter pilot.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

I really love comedy, so I'd have to say French and Saunders.

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

You Are What You Eat: A Twin Experiment on Netflix. I've got two twin girls who are very different, so I'm always interested in the 'nature or nurture' conversation.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

The conversation is on the agenda more than ever before, but while many companies have been putting diversity, equity, and inclusion into greater focus over the last few years, there is still significant room for improvement and we must be aware that the issue doesn't become a tick-box exercise to ensure we keep the conversation authentic. Highlighting the correlation between diversity and performance is therefore really key – we're not doing this because it's 'woke', but because it's better for business.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I'd encourage myself to always make sure I was enjoying what I do. I've had to juggle being a parent with some big, busy roles so many times in the past and I know that the second you're losing your energy and passion for the role, or feeling too stretched, you start to resent it for pulling you away from what's most important in life - your family. The juggle can be incredibly challenging and unfortunately I believe this challenge is something that women typically have to deal with more than men.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I've learnt a great deal from so many different people throughout my career. A few that stand out are Jane Shepperton at

Topshop, for her strength of character and decision making. Ingvar Kamprad at IKEA, he lived and breathed retail in a really authentic way. And then my very first store manager as a River Island Saturday girl. I really admired her approach to leadership and she gave me a real love for retail. I truly believe in the power of compassionate leadership, leading with kindness has an incredibly positive effect on colleagues and it's something I've taken into my leadership roles over the years.

“ I truly believe in the power of compassionate leadership ”

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

I'd say that working in retail is such an incredible experience. The travel, responsibility, challenges, friendships, pace, and breadth of the roles available is unlike any other industry. Retail allows you the opportunity to learn the basics of business operations and transferable skills – managing thousands of people, overseeing financial performance, and gaining all the life experience that comes with working in big teams. I've got four girls (it's a busy household!) and I'd encourage them all to go into the world of retail if they wanted to.



Sarah Ellis

Company A.F. Blakemore & Son / Job Title Group Marketing Director



I began my career in a marketing agency, initially in the tech sector before moving across to retail working on House of Fraser and supporting GE Global Finance as they expanded their store card network. A move to McCann Manchester deepened my love of the

sector and I enjoyed 14 years working across a range of accounts but ten of those were focused on the growth of Aldi and being part of the team that evolved it into the loved brand it is today.

A move client-side bought me to A.F. Blakemore, one of the UK's leading family businesses operating across the breadth of the food sector with 900 convenience stores including company-owned and independent SPAR retail partners. The group also owns the Philpotts brand, a chain of sandwich and bakery stores. In my role I own not only the strategic marketing plan but also have responsibility for Group digital strategy, insight, brand and the in-house media centre.

I've also had the privilege of being the Executive Sponsor of Women in Blakemore for the last four years culminating in our recognition at People in Retail as the winner of their Diversity Initiative of the Year award 2023.



What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I have been lucky enough to collaborate with some fantastic people through my life, both men and

women who transcend traditional management roles who have imbued me with skills that extend across the personal and professional sphere whether this is through

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I wouldn't say I have one. There are elements of lots of people I admire – Karren Brady, Jacqueline Gold, Gabby Logan, Davina McCall and as a Liverpool supporter, Jurgen Klopp.

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

I love the *High Performance* podcast. Even the guests that I think I won't relate to, I always take away something really interesting.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I love the psychology of elite sport and team dynamics, so maybe a sports psychologist

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The evolution of digital and how the in and out of store experience becomes more entwined to deliver a seamless customer journey and personalised customer experience

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

My mum – I miss her.

emotional intelligence, negotiation, stress management, goal setting or simply the ability to effectively communicate.

it happen you will, if you don't you'll find excuses."

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Constantly do things that frighten you. That's where your comfort edge expands, you'll surprise yourself at what you can achieve!

“ Constantly do things that frighten you.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

You have two ears and one mouth for a reason, listen to hear and not to respond. This is so important not only as a marketer trying to get to the underlying insight of our customer, but day-to-day I'm always surprised by how little people really listen.

Something else that I live by is "if you want to make

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Honesty, integrity, loyalty, fairness, challenging and importantly a sense of humour as sometimes this is what can get you through those difficult times. I think understanding your leadership shadow is key to being a good leader, opening up your mind to your blind spots and giving increased credibility.



Liz Evans

Company **Asda** / Job Title **Chief Commercial Officer – Non-Food**



I joined Asda in January 2022 to lead its George clothing and general merchandise business. The early part of my career was spent at M&S in roles across retail, womenswear and its international business, before leading a number of UK fashion brands. Prior to joining

Asda, I was the CEO of family lifestyle brand FatFace.

I'm a Trustee of the Prince's Trust, the Chair of The Prince's Trust Trading Board, and a passionate advocate for the development of female leaders in retail.

I actively support the charity 'Speakers for Schools', a UK-wide youth charity dedicated to helping students find their footing in life through specialised career support and was appointed as an Honorary Professor at Glasgow Caledonian University in 2016.

In January I was proud to step forward as an ambassador for Asda's LGBTQ+ Inclusion Network, where I look forward to listening to the lived experiences of colleagues to make our business an even more inclusive place to work and shop.

I live in London with my husband, and outside of work I love spending family time in France as well as skiing. I'm a keen Welsh rugby supporter and a fan of Arsenal Football Club.



What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Role models have given me the confidence to believe I can succeed, they have demonstrated the power of collaborative working, and taught me to identify the best in people and play to their strengths.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be brave and don't be held back by the fear of failure.

What first inspired you into a career in retail?

Knowing that I wanted to work with people, and I loved shopping! My journey

started working on the shop floor in Boots whilst at school, and I was also inspired to get into retail at a careers fair.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Retail is a fantastic industry that has a breadth of career opportunities, so always be open-minded and explore all the opportunities that the industry has to offer. I would also say if you love working in a fast-paced environment and working collaboratively with a diverse team, where no one day is ever the same, this is a great career choice.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Michelle Obama!

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Working in the charity sector, working for a cause I feel passionately about.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Fei-Fei Li, Professor at Stanford University. She's a world-leading expert in AI, recognised for her pioneering work. She'd definitely be my dream dinner party guest!

Maria Glasscock

Company **Selfridges** / Job Title **Executive People Director**



I am an HR executive with an unwavering commitment to transforming organisations from the inside out. I am a trusted advisor to the business, who works collaboratively with humility and integrity, helping Selfridges to achieve its purpose of

Reinventing Retail whilst creating a sustainable future for people and the planet. With responsibility for developing and leading Selfridges' people strategies, I oversee our organisational culture including DE&I, recruitment, talent, communications, reward, and HR systems. My role is dedicated to enabling all Selfridges team members to deliver our business strategy with effective policies, procedures and best practice. My career history has been widespread across the retail sector, starting as HR Advisor for Boots, holding HR roles within renowned companies such as B&Q and BidFood UK, before joining the Selfridges HR team in 2012 and becoming Executive Director - People in 2020. Within this time, I have honed my passion for supporting people in being themselves, particularly women and those from underrepresented groups.

In my decade at Selfridges, I have championed inclusivity and diversity within the workplace and made long-lasting positive change by listening to the things that matter to team members, and creating a culture where everyone is welcome.



Image credit: Andrew Meredith

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't worry as much as you do, and be brave, now is the time to take some risks. You can take time to broaden your horizons, make some mistakes – you will continue to learn from

them. Always remember to look after yourself and have some fun along the way!

What does success mean to you?

Driving real culture change, where the organisation and its people are successful

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

When I look back, I have had many role models in my career, from family members to team members in the workplace.

One common thread is the strong female influences in my life - I've been able to look up to them and seek advice. I've valued the time they've invested in developing and mentoring me throughout my career, as without them, I wouldn't be where I am today.

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

I recently went to see the Exhibition from Marina

Abramović at the Royal Academy. It was extremely thought provoking and presented key moments from Abramović's career through sculpture, video, installation and performance.

If you weren't working in HTL/Retail, what would you be doing?

Running a small independent business by the sea. When I feel the need to relieve tension or stress, if I can, I will head to the beach. I often find my mind is clearer when I'm breathing in the sea air.

together. At Selfridges, our vision is to Reinvent Retail, and we can only do that by creating an environment where people feel engaged and empowered to innovate. Where we work collaboratively and think creatively, actively pursuing solutions to challenges that drive progress and growth for our business to ensure we consistently deliver the best outcomes for our customers.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Retail is a fantastic place to start or re-enter the workplace, regardless of your educational background. You have the chance to work flexibly and move into a wide variety of

“ I value those leaders who focus on developing a growth mindset.

roles with a diverse group of people through on-the-job learning. At Selfridges, we have focused on skills development through apprenticeships and career mobility through our Yellow Careers Club.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Leaders who act with integrity, self-awareness, and resilience - I particularly value those leaders who focus on developing a growth mindset.



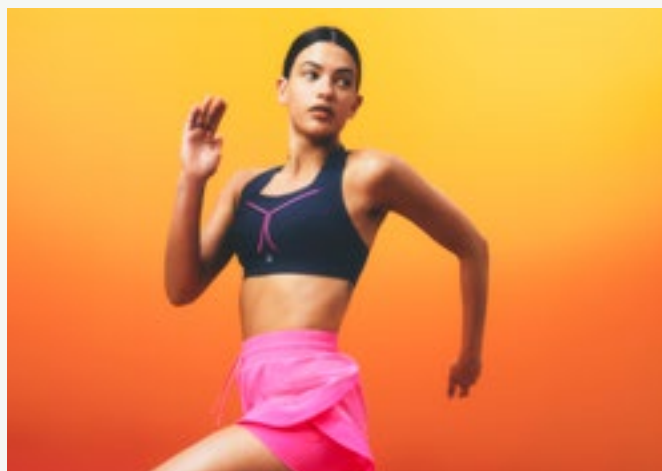
Jessica Goddard

Company **Sweaty Betty** / Job Title **Head of Studio Production**



I am an experienced fashion and digital content production lead with 15 years of experience. Starting my early career path as stylist and leaning on my creative degree and skills, my approach to finding a career path was to keep my experience broad, take any opportunities

that arose and to find a pathway that suited my skills. This thinking led me to content production within digital and retail. I come from a successful luxury fashion background. I worked for Matches Fashion for eight years, leading a studio production team through the company boom, and growing the department to more than a hundred people. I have gained valuable experience in all aspects of both creative producing and online ecommerce production, heading up studio production departments within varying brands and set ups. I'm driven by working in a creative and collaborative team.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

The retail fashion sector has historically been male dominated, and in my early career I often found myself surrounded by male leaders. However, I've worked alongside so many strong, inspirational women through the years, who have each truly made their mark. Women leaders should be supported and celebrated, shown the next steps, and given exciting opportunities based on their skills and experience, not just their gender.

but only in the last few years. Today, it's a very promising time to kick-off a career in fashion retail – and it's the industry's responsibility to ensure we see progress and the next generation of women are empowered. We need to start offering opportunities to a wider pool of candidates in fashion retail.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success is being happy in your role, however that may look. For me, this means being surrounded by a team who bring out the best in each other and are having a good time every day. This also brings amazing results commercially. I'm so happy to be part of a collaborative company that recognises and celebrates individuality, and also respects people's working preferences. That's what success means to me.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

A previous Chief Brand Officer of mine, Jess Christie. The most supportive, strong and creative female leader.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Vivienne Westwood.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Living abroad (ideally on an island) and working with animals.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The positive change in I&D in the fashion retail sector – both from a customer facing perspective and internally within the industry. So much has changed and evolved for the better in the last ten years, with more to go...

“ We need to start offering opportunities to a wider pool of candidates in fashion retail.”

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

The conversation around I&D has certainly evolved,

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Lead by example. Always remember to be kind. It's just fashion.



Charlotte Green

Company **Amazon** / Job Title **Director, EU Consumables**



I first started my career in retail almost 25 years ago on the checkouts of our local supermarket, and was immediately drawn by the interesting and fast-paced environment, ever-changing topics, and customer connection and focus. After graduating from Exeter University with a degree in

Politics and German, in 2006 I joined Sainsbury's as a Buyer, where I honed my negotiation skills and developed an understanding of customer trends and behaviour. I joined Amazon in 2011, and have been lucky to be able to launch many different categories here in that time – everything from Fresh Foods to Luxury Beauty to Major Appliances – and now lead some of our European Consumables businesses.

Outside of my core role, I'm very passionate about the topic of mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, and have been part of the Amazon UK MHW launch team, with a particular focus on educating managers on how to best support their teams, as well as opening up the conversation about mental health.

What does 'success' mean to you?

My first ever manager in a corporate role told me that 'success' for him would be to work for me one day, and I still love that idea – I believe my success is ultimately determined by my ability to contribute to, and support, the success of my team and those around me.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The most valuable lesson I've learned in my career is the profound impact of kindness in leadership. Treating team members with empathy, compassion, and a willingness to help not only fosters a positive work environment but also builds long-lasting trust and respect. An absence of kindness in the workplace can be truly damaging

to individuals, the team and to the business.

“ My first ever manager in a corporate role told me that 'success' for him would be to work for me one day, and I still love that idea.

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

Over the course of my career, I have been proud to develop a reputation for investing in people, developing talent and for leading with empathy. However, it has at times felt that these attributes

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I am inspired by those who lead with empathy and compassion, and who are not afraid to be vulnerable and open.

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

It's about five years old now, but I regularly watch Carla Harris' TED Talk on the importance of sponsorship in career progression for women and diverse candidates in particular – it's an important reminder to

ask yourself, who "at the table" can and will represent you?

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Technology continues to drive truly exciting advancements in the retail sector, such as AI-driven personalisation and innovative in-store shopping experiences. Evolving consumer behaviour and preferences contribute to a dynamic landscape, creating opportunities for continued growth and change.

have been less valuable than more 'hard' business skills. Being nominated as a Woman to Watch is validation that these skills are both seen and valued, and motivates me to continue breaking barriers, fostering inclusivity, and leading by example.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

Elevating women leaders in

retail is vital for the simple fact that diverse leadership teams bring a variety of viewpoints, enhancing creativity and problem-solving. By spotlighting women's achievements, we challenge outdated norms, inspiring a more inclusive industry culture that better resonates with a diverse customer base. This not only contributes to business success but also reflects a commitment to equality and progress.



Lysa Hardy

Company **Hotel Chocolat** / Job Title **Managing Director, Hotel Chocolat D2C**
Non Exec Director, Superdry



I sit on the executive board at Hotel Chocolat, reporting to co-founder Angus Thirlwell. It's a wonderful brand with a mission to make people and nature happy through reinventing chocolate. I also hold a non-executive role at Superdry, and am co-founder of start-up

probiotic skincare business Beauty & Vitality.

I'm motivated by growth, and have enjoyed scaling businesses in a variety of ownership structures across different sectors during my career. I've always tried to work with brands that I can identify with and have purpose, and have been very fortunate to work in some amazing businesses. I've worked on business transformation, restructuring, global expansion, and also in two businesses that have been acquired (HC and Holland & Barrett) and one JV (Everything Everywhere). I strongly believe my early career in commercial marketing roles gave me great grounding for leading businesses more generally, and I still enjoy mentoring marketers. I also learned a great deal from living and working in other countries.

I'm a Fellow of The Marketing Academy, which offers fabulous programmes for marketers interested in general management and leadership roles, and am the proud owner of a Cannes Gold Lion for TV ad of the year with T-Mobile's dance flashmob.

QUICKFIRE

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

I recently read *The Salt Path* which is a fascinating true story about humanity and nature. I am always in awe of how resilient humans can be, but also how a connection with nature can reignite and refuel the soul.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I would retrain as an architect. I've always been fascinated by buildings and spaces, and how people use them – live in them, visit them, work in them – but also how great buildings can transform people's lives.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Billy Connolly – he'd be an absolute hoot and I love his observation of life.



How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

It has certainly moved on from being about women and ethnic diversity, to a more sophisticated conversation with topics such as social mobility and neurodiversity – all the aspects that make us human. This is where the magic is for retail – building teams that reflect society will only help us serve society better. Retail is about the most human sector there is, so it's great we are having these conversations, but it's a shame it's taken so long.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

It's a bit of a cliché, but the most challenging times lead to the biggest growth. When it feels really tough, that is exactly the time to really lean in and know



The most challenging times lead to the biggest growth.

you'll come out the other side better and stronger for it. I've had many of these moments and when I look back on them, they were the times I learned the most and in almost every situation it led to something bigger and better.

What does 'success' mean to you?

I love this question – success has such a personal definition. For me it's that I can hold my head high knowing I gave it my best shot, live by my values and treat people fairly, and feel fulfilled that I've made a difference.



Lisa Heidemanns

Company **lululemon** / Job Title **Senior Manager, Omnichannel EMEA**



I took a slightly less conventional route into retail. After university, I started out in strategy consulting focusing on commercial due diligence to support private equity deals. I loved the fast-paced nature of the work and being able to gain insights into many different

industries. Quite quickly, I discovered a passion for retail and luxury goods, and joined Louis Vuitton, overseeing the commercial performance of one of their highest grossing UK stores. Moving from a desk job to being on the shop floor was a fascinating shift in dynamics and I effectively learned what it takes to run a multimillion-pound business. After holding roles across retail, operations and omnichannel, I moved within the LVMH Group and joined Rimowa, heading up global customer experience and building this new function from scratch. As a fitness enthusiast and qualified yoga instructor, I always kept a close eye on one of my favourite brands: lululemon. A few years and small dose of serendipity later, I joined their European HQ in London to establish and run their EMEA omnichannel business. I've loved every minute in this incredible company that not only has a clear vision and purpose, but also enables its people to discover their own purpose and fulfil their full potential.



What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Never stop in your pursuit of learning – at work or otherwise.

“ Be your most authentic self and live by your values.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be your most authentic self and live into your values. Don't be afraid to speak up and don't be afraid to ask for help. Surround yourself with people who are supportive and bring out the best in you. Don't let an opportunity pass by because you think you need to have all the answers first.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Vision, integrity, courage, humility and the ability

to see the lighter side of things!

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

Many companies have been on a very positive journey when it comes to diversity and inclusion. When I first started out, the conversation was practically non-existent and incredible strides have been taken, especially over the last five or so years. I'm proud to work for a company that is committed to putting D&I into action and considers this critical to individuals' and the organisation's continuous development. The company serves an amazing global community and doesn't shy away from real and impactful conversations. These conversations are alive every day in lululemon's culture, and this is one of the factors that makes me feel really valued as an employee.

QUICKFIRE

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

I recently attended a talk by Adam Grant. Something interesting I took away from this was that instead of asking for feedback, you're better off asking for advice. Feedback focuses on how well you did in the past (and people might not be forthcoming with this).

Advice shifts the attention to how you can to better next time.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

In a very similar space: health and wellness.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Too many to choose from! Annie Leibovitz, Michelle Obama, Lady Gaga.



Maria Hollins

Company **Ann Summers** / Job Title **Chief Executive Officer**



I am CEO at Ann Summers, and over the past five years have been responsible for leading the turnaround and growth of the iconic multi-channel retailer as it continues its mission to empower all. Originally joining Ann Summers as a commercial consultant

in July 2018, I was appointed Joint Managing Director in February 2019 and sole Managing Director in February 2022. In July 2023, it was announced that I would step into the role of Chief Executive.

Starting my career at Arcadia, I have gained more than 30 years' experience working within the retail industry, previously holding Board positions at both ASOS and House of Fraser.

I have contributed to the transformation of Ann Summers, leading the successful delivery of the brand's business strategy; improving product, channel experience, tech-led transformation, corporate social responsibility, and colleague experience; and driving both current and future commercial growth.

QUICKFIRE

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I would probably be doing something to do with property. I love interior design and architecture.

Who is your role model?

My mother. She's really strong and resilient. She's also very, very determined and I think I'm quite a lot

like her. She brought me up to be a pretty tough woman and I am beyond grateful for that.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

It's too difficult to choose one, but Dame Judi Dench, Michelle Obama and Adele would be top of my list.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I've been in the sector for over 30 years, and in that time the EDI agenda has really changed.

While women are still underrepresented in leadership roles, the proportion of women at the top levels has really improved. I think there's now a 30% representation, and it was probably nearer 5% or 10% when I started out.

Most significantly, businesses now have a clear EDI strategy. There's a desire to make things better – not just on women but on physical and mental ability, race and gender too. Whilst this is great progress and something I am passionate about, there's still a way to go. We all need to be more intentional in our actions to see a tangible impact.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would advise myself to have more confidence. I've had imposter syndrome for most of my career, and really, it's only in the last few years that I've actually thought: I know what I'm doing, I can do this. I'm very fortunate that my career progressed pretty quickly, but I

actually think that going through the ranks quickly, played into the imposter syndrome even more. I kind of doubted myself, thinking "am I bluffing it?" Do I actually know what I'm doing? Having greater confidence is something I am also trying to instill in my team.

“ I feel very strongly that it's important to empower your team and give them freedom.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

A good leader needs to be able to set direction and give the team a clear view of what we're trying to achieve and how we're going to achieve it. I feel very strongly that it's important to empower your team and to give them freedom to operate. And if they make mistakes, that's fine. It's okay to make mistakes as long as we learn from them. For me it is about that delegation, empowerment, and challenge, but a respectful challenge.

Claire Koziol

Company Central Co-op / Job Title Head of Talent



I have worked within the retail sector for my entire career, starting as a part time checkout operator at Kwik Save. Enjoying the hustle and bustle of retail and the team 'family' environment, I took on a supervisor role at the age of 18. I was fortunate to work through various

roles in supermarkets, and with my passion for developing others and the autonomy to create the best working environment for my team, I decided to understand more about people and completed a CIPD post graduate diploma at night school. Around the same time, I took the big step into field operations. As the only female operations manager it was a daunting step, but I was driven to make a bigger difference for the teams I worked with and the business. My career path continued as Retail Group Manager, Head of Stores and then to Head of Trading Operations, until last year when I had the fantastic opportunity to apply for my current role as Head of Talent at Central Co-op. The role is extremely rewarding, putting both my leadership and people skills to use to support a brilliant place to work and grow a career for everyone.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Anyone that stands up for what they believe in and paves the way for others to create positive change.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

My early career aspirations were to go into teaching art – now it's just a hobby!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I'm most excited to see pay improving for our hourly paid colleagues, knowing how hard they work often during unsociable hours.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

For me, I know how demanding retail work can be, and so often women are juggling family commitments and don't feel they have an option for a career too. I completed

all my store manager training part time as a single parent then. It wasn't easy but retail does have flexibility and opportunity, we need to continue to encourage and support women to be able to have careers alongside families if they want to.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

The majority of store managers when I first started in retail were male, however I remember a woman manager starting in a store I worked in and before that point I hadn't considered that role was an opportunity for me. I've always been inspired by women in senior positions, I believe it helps you visualise your own opportunity and potential.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

For a leader, I really value empowerment and having the autonomy to be trusted to do my role. I've worked for many leaders over my career – those who over manage and want complete control to those who were totally

“ Leading through empowering others is engaging and fulfilling.

absent. Leading through empowering others is both engaging and fulfilling in my experience.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Be you, you are enough! I spent years trying to copy 'the boys', trying to fit in and mimic others' behaviours and never felt comfortable or confident. A previous leader once passed me in the corridor whilst I was waiting for an interview, and said the words 'just be yourself'. So I tried it and it was easy and it worked!



Victoria Lockie

Company **Nisa** / Job Title **Head of Retail**



I am a hugely driven retail expert with 36 years of experience, and a proven track record of delivering through my team. I enjoy working on strategic transformation projects and love to strip out complexity and deliver change. And I have seen a lot of change within my

career – in the companies I have worked for and in the marketplace.

Throughout my career, I have operated in many different roles, including project management, acquisition, IT, shared services, retail operations and now leading the Nisa field team, responsible for 2,500+ stores and over £1bn sales. I have a very positive leadership style; inspiring others to deliver. I have demonstrated resilience within a challenging environment whilst promoting core values of honesty and integrity. I am continuing to make great strides in terms of D&I and in particular supporting the Co-op Aspire, Diversity in Wholesale, Women in Convenience groups. I am continually learning from other businesses and sharing experiences and ideas. I am a true Nisa/Co-op ambassador, acknowledging that diversity and inclusion is not just about what we can do within Nisa, it is about the whole industry coming together through open and honest conversations to ensure we shape a diverse and balanced industry for the future.



What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

It means a lot! To be recognised at this point in my career as a Woman to Watch is testament to all the hard work I've put in throughout the years and I'm so proud to be chosen. Diversity and inclusion is very important to me and being a role model to younger women coming through the ranks in Nisa/Co-op is amazing.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

I've had times in my career where I've been the only woman in the room so I want other women to know that you can stand out and have your voice heard. I think a range of voices really adds something to any conversation and brings different perspectives.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I think there's been a massive change from the start of my career to now. I see women across the industry taken far more seriously than they were some years ago. At Nisa, we've had many more opportunities for women since being taken over by the Co-op through established networks and a greater voice in discussing diversity projects.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Patience is key. I've had to learn to always have the facts before jumping in feet first. I'd tell myself to stay true to myself and be loyal to your team. By doing things in the right way and treating everyone with respect you earn your way up the ladder. If you deliver on your promises, then that buys you loyalty which is priceless.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Debbie Robinson who is now the CEO of Central Co-op. I spent my early days in the industry listening to and learning from her.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I'd love to own a large-scale food hall and restaurant. I'd link in with the latest innovations, amazing formats (many that I have seen in Northern Ireland and ROI), sharing the space with

foodie start-ups and local suppliers.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Laura Kenny, the record medal winning British cyclist.

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

I've found it interesting learning about the impact of social media and how powerful those platforms can be.



Emma Long

Company **Dreams** / Job Title **Chief Customer Officer**



I joined Dreams in January 2023, having spent over 25 years in the retail sector. I practically grew up in retail, starting my career as a sales colleague in stores to running my first store at the age of 21. I held retail director roles with Dixons Carphone before moving

to the DFS Group. I spent five years in the executive team at the DFS Group leading the retail business function as both Chief Operating Officer and Retail Director, before leading the customer transformation strategy for DFS as its Customer Change Director. I'm now a year into my role at Dreams where I'm able to bring all this experience to bear.



What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

When I was a store manager in the early stages of my career, I was particularly inspired by an area manager, who once said to me "retail is simple. It's the people that make it complicated." This really stuck with me, and it was a useful reminder that people are the lifeblood of any retailer: without good people, it's incredibly difficult to provide the service that customers want and need.

This piece of advice really informed my career, and since then, I've always

stuck to the principle of 'people and customer first'. This is all about ensuring I create the right kind of environment for all my colleagues to thrive, supporting with their development and holding them accountable for their performance. This is something I've brought with me to my role at Dreams, and I've found it really helps to uphold the high standards of the business.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me is several things. In my current role, I would say that firstly it's

QUICKFIRE

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I'd probably be working in the travel industry. I have a passion for seeing the world and experiencing different cultures.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I get most excited about the different ways we can drive better customer experiences through

innovation. Technology such as Dreams' Sleepmatch which helps customers find the right product for them, has been a real game changer and I look forward to seeing what lies ahead.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Richard Branson. I'd be intrigued to hear about all the things he's achieved and where he gets his inspiration from.

about being able to deliver an amazing experience for our customers. Secondly, it's about all the team winning together, and finally, it's about creating and working in a culture that is inspiring.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The most valuable lesson I have learnt is that it's OK not to have the answer to everything. Giving yourself and others time to go away and find the right answer, generally means you make better decisions. At the start of my career, I always thought when my boss saw somebody ask me a question, I had to know the answer and spent many hours prepping to ensure I could answer all the questions that might possibly crop up. It probably comes with confidence, but it's OK not to have the answer at the time and to come back with an informed decision.

What I love about retail is if I have a question that I don't know the answer to, I visit or speak to my teams in the stores, and they often have the answer.

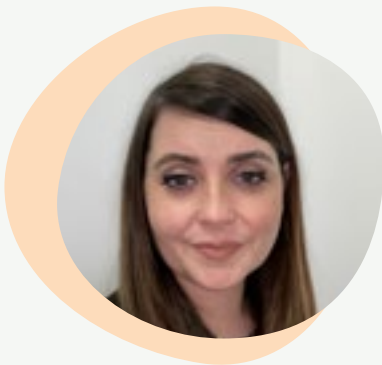
What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

I would say they should absolutely go for it. Retail is a really dynamic and rewarding industry to work in. There are so many different directions it can take you, which means retail teams are some of the most diverse around. For example, at Dreams, our executive board is 4:3 women to men, illustrating the diversity that is mirrored across our business. If you have a passion for communication and providing customers with excellent service, are outgoing and enjoy talking to people, then retail could be the place for you. I can promise you no two days will ever be the same.



Ruth Mann

Company **Sweaty Betty** / Job Title **VP Marketing**



I am a strategic brand builder who's worked for some of the world's biggest brands in sports and lifestyle for almost 20 years. I am extremely passionate about making brands relevant to wider audiences, and putting the consumer at the heart of everything I do. When

I left education, I didn't even know that marketing was a career option so I'm extremely grateful for the people who gave me the opportunity to learn and grow on the job when I was starting out. I was fortunate enough to develop my craft while at Pentland Brands working on incredible businesses like Lacoste and Ellesse, and now at Sweaty Betty as VP of Marketing I am lucky enough to merge two of my biggest passions – sport and female empowerment – as part of my day job. As a mum to two mixed-heritage young girls, to be able to use my job to truly make a difference through driving for better representation throughout the retail industry is what motivates me on a daily basis.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

I would tell my younger self to not feel the pressure to conform. I have always been an opinionated person – and that has got me to where I am today. But my younger self felt the pressure to be more like other people. Diversity of thought is so important in business and now I'm very conscious to create a culture within my team where this is valued as highly as any other skill.

to encourage people to bring their true self to work everyday. Without this the culture suffers, and it doesn't create a platform for success for people to thrive.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I have been fortunate enough to work with some amazing leaders in my career. The ones who have truly championed me when I have doubted myself are the ones that have left a lasting impact. I am truly grateful for their support and guidance and I continue to lean on them when I'm in need of honest and reliable advice.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me is seeing my team thrive. A big part of what motivates me is developing young talent and passing on my knowledge. If I can help empower people to achieve through sharing my knowledge, that's success to me.

“ The hierarchical structure of business is being dismantled by entrepreneurial and digital-first thinking.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

For me it's about honesty, integrity, and authenticity. I think it's really important

QUICKFIRE

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

I love a good podcast – my morning routine involves listening to *The Rest is Politics*. Learning how to disagree agreeably is a skill I think we could all do with.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I think I'd be in politics. I think the political world would greatly improve if

a consumer first mindset was taken, and ultimately I love connecting with people so would enjoy the thought of championing the real issues that people face on a daily basis.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

That the hierarchical structure of business is being dismantled by entrepreneurial and digital-first thinking. I love that an amazing creative idea can come from anywhere.

Alexandra Mendel

Company **QVC UK** / Job Title **Vice President Buying, Planning, Programming**



Graduating from the University of Mannheim in 1995 with a Business degree, I continued to work for four years at my sponsor Metro in buying, then decided to join Breuninger department stores as Buyer, Home. In 2000, I accepted an offer from QVC Duesseldorf and

till 2016 drove strategy and growth in progressing roles throughout buying and in project management.

My husband and I both worked part-time after 2002 for a few years and loved sharing raising our kids together. I certainly will never forget that question: "How about moving to China?" While I was always interested in living and working abroad, this was quite a decision. But in 2016 as a family of four we went on our first assignment, moved to Beijing for me to lead buying and planning at our JV. Another move in 2017 resulted in four incredible, very successful years in Tokyo, filled with change management and learning, leading buying at QVC Japan. After a short time back to Germany as VP Business Lead of Qurate's global SAP S4 Hana implementation, I followed my passion for buying again. Since October 2022, I have been VP Buying, Planning, Programming at QVC UK, living in London, and very proud of a year getting back to growth with our fantastic team!

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

As a woman and mother in the workforce, I have faced career impacts and bias, and had to manage social and cultural expectations. My five years living and working in Asia truly highlighted the scale of change needed, and also the responsibility I have in this as senior leader. QVC's work in the TMRG groups is making a difference and we are proud to have recently won the UK Menopause Friendly Employer award. We as a society have a very long way to go still, and I am proud to be DE&I Gender sponsor and one of the women recognised

here for their efforts and passion to drive change. Every recognition increases awareness!

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

I truly think I could have benefitted from seeing more women leaders and role models, especially in my early career. Now, I want to be that inspiration and role model to others. Reading last year's Women to Watch Index, I was inspired by each leader's unique path. If you are reading this now – please feel free to reach out on LinkedIn... I'd be happy to connect!

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I have different role models for different areas that I feel I can and need to learn from – for example our son for patience and listening, a former boss for networking, a colleague for his inclusive approach, my husband for always offering a different angle. There are many more!

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

I loved the positivity, ambition and just-do-it mentality of Aaron Phipps at last year's WiHTL & DiR Summit. Such a role model, truly inspiring.

If you weren't working in Retail, what would you be doing?

I love retail... where else would I want to work?! I'd probably run an outdoors company. Hiking, skiing, gardening, traveling, running... everything outdoors is my balance.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Angela Merkel – to ask her what she thinks of the value of role modeling and sponsorship to achieve gender balance in politics and beyond.



What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

In my early career I was quite a perfectionist, and I certainly still am my harshest critic. The slightly exasperated comment from my former leader, "Love 85%! Your 85% is better than what most others deliver. Put your energy to reaching hearts, not the +15%," gave me

very valuable perspective and very importantly: CONFIDENCE.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Balancing my work with wellbeing. Finding myself in a negative work environment, I had to learn the hard way to respect my limits. Which helps me now with my mid-life challenges!



Ruth Mutton

Company **A.F. Blakemore & Son** / Job Title **Regional Manager**



As a teenager I remember eagerly awaiting my National Insurance number as I was desperate to start earning my own money. At the age of 15 I was cleaning office buildings and toilets in the morning before school. I then progressed to part-time roles in retail

and hospitality during my A Level studies. It was in these roles that I realised my passion for retail.

After completing my studies, I made the obvious choice and began my career in February 1999 as a Trainee Manager in a Spar convenience store, working for Tates Ltd who were owned by AF Blakemore. From there, I swiftly progressed to Store Manager in a newly refurbished Spar store where I stayed for two years before becoming the business' youngest Area Manager in 2001. Working alongside Store Managers, I was responsible for the operation and profitability of 16 Spar stores.

In 2016, I proudly accepted the promotion to Regional Manager. This saw me becoming not only the youngest but first female senior leader in Blakemore Retail. I have now had 25 incredible years working for a company that I love and am immensely proud to be associated with.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

My parents have been very important role models to me. We didn't come from a privileged background, and they worked multiple jobs to support me and my siblings. They instilled in us a very strong work ethic – the idea that if you want something, you have to work for it.

I've also had lots of professional role models who have inspired me. I've worked at Blakemore for more than 25 years, and throughout that time I've looked to people who empower teams to be the best they can be, and who have challenged and supported me to leave my comfort zone.

On the flip side, I think it's important to recognise when we're experiencing negative role modelling, and know when to spot what not to do.

“ I'm clear in my thinking that if you empower your team in the right way, the financial results will come.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I'd tell myself not to be afraid to ask questions. I was very young when I became an area manager,

QUICKFIRE

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I've always been fascinated by psychology. I'm intrigued by what influences human behaviour, so I'd probably be pursuing a career in that field.

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

I recently learnt (during a family quiz at Christmas!) that the word for muscle comes from the Latin, meaning 'little mouse', because the Romans thought a bicep looked like a little mouse.

and I thought that if I didn't have all the answers people would think I wasn't capable, but having the confidence to ask questions can be game-changing in your ability to do your role well. I'd also tell myself to embrace change, and to be my authentic self.

What does success mean to you?

For me, success is about staying continually focused on goals. Whether it's for personal development, colleague development, or business results, it's important to consistently measure accomplishments, and tweak processes if certain targets aren't being reached. I'm clear in my thinking that if you empower your team in

the right way, the financial results will come.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I value self-awareness, visibility, and empathy. A great leader is an excellent communicator, and someone who properly listens to their team. They care about their team's wellbeing, and they're someone who empowers and motivates. Certainly at the top levels, you can't be everywhere all the time, but you need to have a presence without being physically visible – so it's about making sure that people know who you are, what you stand for, and what your vision is.



Anna Parfitt

Company **Oliver Bonas** / Job Title **People Director**



As a teenager and student, I worked for a few retailers, which is where I was first exposed to the variety of the retail industry. When I left university I started my career in retail, firstly in store management and then progressing into area management. I absolutely

loved being in the stores, working with the teams, and meeting customers. The energy and commitment were infectious. I learnt so much about the running of the business as well as about myself – it was hard work but incredibly rewarding. I had always had a passion for the people management side of the business, so when the opportunity to move into an HR role came about, I jumped at the chance. Now some 20 years on I am so grateful to have had and continue to have such a varied and fulfilling career. I joined Oliver Bonas in 2015 leading the people function, which includes HR, L&D, pay and reward, internal comms and ED&I. It is an absolute privilege to be part of the Oliver Bonas team, not only do I get to work for an inspiring brand filled with passionate people, but it's a whole lot of fun too.



What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

I am quite overwhelmed to be asked to participate, especially given the inspiring women featured in the 2023 Index. I have always tried to be as authentic, compassionate, and caring as I can be to anyone that I have met throughout my career.

I am incredibly appreciative to have worked for and been inspired by so many hardworking, passionate, and committed women along the way. I hope that I have managed to do the same for some of the people I have had the pleasure to have managed.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I personally think the conversation around EDI has really evolved in the last few years. There's much greater focus on internal education for managers and team members, to raise awareness of how to create truly inclusive and diverse places to work.

Our approach to EDI at Oliver Bonas is to try and fully integrate it into everything we do so that it just becomes 'business as usual' rather than a separate strategy. We consider EDI to be a continual work in progress and we are fortunate to have a passionate Senior EDI Manager who champions all initiatives and is always looking for areas of improvement.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

As a leader you have to wear many hats. You must inspire, nurture, listen and motivate those around you, which isn't easy.

If I think about the most inspiring leaders I have worked with, they all had the following in common:

- Clarity about what they wanted to achieve
- Authenticity
- Desire to achieve success through others
- Positivity even when faced with obstacles

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My Dad was my role model, he came to this country from India when he was in his early twenties with very little, and then worked hard to build a career for himself. He instilled a strong work ethic in me and had a generous and kind spirit which was always felt by anyone who met him.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

If wasn't working in retail I would have loved to

have been a psychologist. I have a fascination for the human mind and behaviour. My youngest daughter is currently studying psychology and whilst I am super proud of her, I am secretly envious.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

My dream party guest would be Davina McCall, she has done so much to break down the stigma around menopause and really opened up the conversation.



Penny Parry

Company **Nkuku** / Job Title **Sales Director**



My career in retail started when I was studying. I worked for a nursery company which supplied businesses like John Lewis and Mothercare. It was a job to fund my social schedule – but I loved it! I learnt about dealing with buyers and merchandisers,

and very quickly realised I wanted to be on the other side of the table. I began my corporate career at Bonmarché and Next, then moved to Joules because I wanted to be in a smaller organisation. My career really blossomed at Joules – I was part of the leadership team that led the company from fully founder-owned to private equity to IPO. I joined Nkuku in December 2022, where I look after all of our third-party business, both small high street wholesale accounts and also some of the larger nationals.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Probably my grandmother. She was a single parent, and raised three boys while working multiple jobs. A real warrior.

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

I love Elizabeth Day's podcast, *How to Fail*.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

For some time, I wanted to be in the TV and film industry. I wanted to be a makeup artist – so probably that.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

In my early career I had my heart set on a particular type of role, and I took lots of risks to get there. So I think my advice would be to keep that bravery. Throwing yourself into something new almost always pays dividends, and I think I lost that a bit as my career progressed.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I think the people that have had the most impact on me in a positive way have been those who are open and authentic. If you can lead in that way, it paves the way for those around you to be open and authentic as well. A good leader will have a profound impact on how you operate, and how you then go on and lead your teams.

“ Throwing yourself into something new almost always pays dividends.”

What is a lesson you've learnt in your career?

The most valuable lesson has been to not be afraid to reach out and ask for help when you really need it. I think this is especially crucial in retail, where everyone is laser-focused on performance. But sometimes the power comes from showing vulnerability. This thinking has helped me adapt my own leadership style.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I've seen it evolve from something that was literally never on the agenda, to a core element of business strategy. In particular, how we support new parents has shifted in a really positive way. Since my daughter was born 11 years ago, there's been a huge step-change in how companies support people back into work.

I think the next step is ensuring that entire leadership teams really stand behind EDI. It's all very well to say "diversity is really important to us," but senior executives need to be connected to the actions in a practical way, and be open and transparent about the progress still left to make. There are still too many instances where executives talk about EDI in the boardroom, but these intentions aren't felt on the shop floor.

What do you predict for the future of retail?

The last few years – with Covid, global events, and a cost-of-living crisis – have really supercharged resilience among retailers. I think this will be carried through into the future, with leaders having to make critical decisions, at pace. From a customer perspective, I predict people will value physical, in-person retail, and demand higher quality products with sustainability at their core.

Megan Shearer

Company **Monica Vinader** / Job Title **Chief Product Officer**



For the past 14 years, I have had the privilege of working at Monica Vinader, an affordable luxury jewellery brand. Starting as Junior Brand Manager in 2010, my career has spanned several levels of responsibility from retail to the c-suite executive team. After my promotion to

Head of Product in 2015, my life changed as I moved from London to rural Norfolk to work in the senior management team at the company's head office. Since then, I have spearheaded new initiatives focused on progressive change in the jewellery industry, delivering an overhauled product strategy, embedding MV's sustainability agenda, as well as an industry leading traceability programme to ensure our products are responsibly sourced. These initiatives are important steps in disrupting the jewellery industry for the better. As Chief Product Officer, I currently oversee the global commercial product strategy, delivered through an exceptional team of fourteen inspiring women. I am also a proud mother to two amazing girls; they fiercely inspire me to excel in my career. Looking back, I can safely say it has been a phenomenal 14 years of personal growth and development, and I continue to thrive in an industry which both challenges and motivates me every single day.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

Every day I am proud to work for a brand which operates with high standards and integrity across all aspects of what we do, not least in the products we produce and the materials we choose. I am passionate about positively changing the jewellery industry to protect workers' rights and limit environmental damage.

At MV, I led the change to take the bold step forward to disclose our supply chains, proving that jewellery materials can be sourced ethically and responsibly. It is my hope this will pave the way for

others to follow and in turn, shine a light on where our own jewellery comes from and the high standards which can be possible.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Strong leadership to me looks like individuals who lead with vision and clarity. They encourage, motivate, inspire, and challenge teams to produce their best work as part of a happy working culture.

What does 'success' mean to you?

For me, 'success' means pushing boundaries in my career and challenging the industry's gender imbalance. I am proud to work for a company

QUICKFIRE

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

I read *Let My People Go Surfing* by Yvon Chouinard, the founder of Patagonia. It's fascinating how progressive this book is for when it was written and so inspiring from a cultural and business ethics point of view.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

In the jewellery industry, supply chains are highly fragmented and multi-layered. It's rare to know the origin of a particular gemstone

or precious metal, let alone understand its environmental impact or whether the miners were treated fairly. I look forward to seeing substantial change here. The shift is happening, and consumers will increasingly demand change.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

It would be fascinating to sit down with Agnes Strickland. Born in 1796, Agnes and her sisters were prolific and successful authors who defied Victorian gender standards to follow their own passions in life.



which is led and founded by women, and which champions people from all intersectionalities.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

In retail 60% of employees are women, women influence 85% of purchasing decisions, yet we only have 10% of the positions on retail executive boards. This

gender imbalance both shocks me and drives me to initiate change.

I'm proud that MV is a member of DiR and that our team members have access to the various Women Leaders Programmes on offer. Women who challenge the industry's gender norms should be celebrated and applauded so we are no longer the '10%'.



Rachel Sheridan

Company **Vinterior** / Job Title **Chief Commercial & Operating Officer**



I've spent the last 15 years leading early-stage marketplace/multi-brand ecommerce businesses through growth, after a background in strategy and media.

I'm currently Chief Commercial Officer at Vinterior (www.vinterior.co), the marketplace for vintage

and antique furniture and homewares. We're on a mission to make the future of furniture more sustainable. To do that we bring together Europe's largest inventory of quality pre-owned furniture and homeware, making it easy to create good looking, good for the planet interiors. Previously, I was CCO of personalised fashion ecommerce platform Thread for five years, and Trading Director/CPO of online home and garden retailer WorldStores for six years. Both these companies were early-stage, VC backed ventures that experienced 5-10x growth during my time with them. I started my career as a strategy consultant with BCG and internal strategy manager for media group Emap, and also served as VP Europe for National Geographic.

QUICKFIRE

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Indulging my love of sports somehow. Maybe being a sports coach or sports journalist.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Its role in leading the sustainability revolution. Retail and HTL introduce customers to new products and experiences that shape their choices and make them think differently. I believe these

industries can make it an easy and positive experience for people across the world to make more sustainable choices, and I'm excited by the impact that can have.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Billie Jean King. Not only was she exceptional at her sport, but for an incredible female leader who lifted all those around her up with her, look no further. I'd love to hear her stories first-hand.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

These industries have a high percentage of women working in them, but at the leadership levels the balance tends to be different with far lower female representation. It's really important to highlight female leaders so that young women starting out in the industry feel they can aim high and not hit a ceiling.

“ I love to create and take to market products and experiences that didn't exist before and that customers are overjoyed to discover.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I'd like to be remembered for three things: innovation, sustainability and building teams that people loved working in. I love to create and take to market products and experiences that didn't exist before and that customers are overjoyed to discover, as I've done with the last three companies I've worked for. I'm passionate about sustainability; I developed Thread's net zero plan and am delighted to be working

for a circular economy business with sustainability at its heart. And one of the things I love the most about my job is building teams and developing people. When team members tell me what they've gained from working on teams I've led, it makes me particularly happy and proud.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Courage, EQ and humility.

Working in disruptive businesses, I've found the best leaders are brave enough to be bold, decisive and willing to take risks even in a very uncertain context. But they also need to be humble enough to identify and own mistakes and to make sure both they and their business are constantly learning. And high EQ leaders are more likely to get the best from their teams and be rewarding to work with.

Sandrine Zhang Ferron, the founder and CEO of Vinterior, has all of these in spades.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

I'd tell myself not to worry so much about job titles, promotions or knowing where you want to be in five or ten years' time. I'd tell myself to look for opportunities to work with great people on exciting opportunities because that leads to learning a lot, achieving a lot and enjoying the journey while you do it. My career path has been relatively unplanned, but all the more exciting for it.

Suzy Slavid

Company **WYSE London** / Job Title **Chief Executive Officer**



After finishing my higher education with an Art Foundation Course and having no idea of what I wanted to do with my life, I stumbled into an unknown career responding to an ad which said 'If you're numerate and interested in fashion, apply here'. I had

no idea what I was walking into, and started as a product admin at Dorothy Perkins. I absolutely fell in love with retail from my first day on the job. It had the perfect blend of using my analytical skills by quickly spotting trends in data with my creative side, helping to visually spot gaps and opportunities within ranges. At Arcadia, I quickly worked my way up through the merchandising route, leaving as a Senior Merchandiser to join River Island. There, I expanded my product knowledge further covering womenswear, menswear and kidswear as a Merchandise Manager. Moving to Boden, I added direct mail to my stores experience and expanded my commercial remit on the Board as Chief Trading Officer covering merchandising, marketing and ecommerce. As CEO at WYSE London, I am excited to be leading our ambitious growth strategy with particular focus on the US.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Marielle Wyse, for being a woman who brought her passion to life late in her career, showing that anything is possible with hard work and determination. She's also incredibly customer centric, ambitious and energetic. And Richard Bradbury, the current Executive Chair at River Island, for being

the most brilliant retailer, compassionate leader and mentor.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I would probably have been an accountant – I do love a spreadsheet!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Madonna.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

I feel it is really important to highlight women leaders in retail to inspire upcoming talent that

anything is possible. To be honest, throughout my career, I didn't think a lot about whether it was men or women in roles, or if gender had a part to play in my success. However,



when I was promoted to my first Board position, I was amazed at the positive impact and message it sent out to the wider team, inspiring the other women in the building that it was possible for a woman and a mother to hold a top leadership position.

“ When I was promoted to my first Board position, I was amazed at the positive impact and message it sent out to the wider team.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Huge. I have been very lucky to have worked with some amazing, talented people and I have drawn upon what I have felt to be the best of all of their attributes and experiences to shape me into the leader and businessperson I am today. I know the kind of leaders who have helped me thrive and grow, and how I want to nurture talent around me.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

Always consider the 'what if' scenario.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Honest, empathic, supportive, encouraging, motivational, ambitious.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

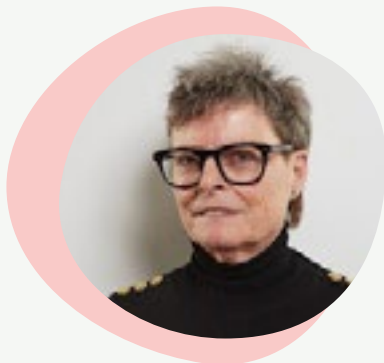
Fail early, fail often, but always fail forward. Standing still is going backwards. I have never been afraid to take chances or own my mistakes – as long as you learn from it, it puts you in a stronger position moving forward.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

For me, retail is the most fun and rewarding career I could have hoped for. It can be stressful and 'always on' as a website is never closed, but you can very quickly see the results of your work and it can be so satisfying and fulfilling. I would say to go into an industry you genuinely love because if you do, it can often feel more of a hobby than a job!

Kath Smith

Company JD Sports / Job Title Senior Independent Director



First of all, it's a great honour to be included as a Woman to Watch. I have 40 years UK and international business experience in the consumer and retail sectors, building world-leading brands. In 1998, I became Managing Director at adidas working extensively across

Europe and Asia, and then in 2006 became MD Reebok Northern Europe. My last executive post was as General Manager and Vice President EMEA, The North Face (a VF Corporation company). In recent years I have developed my non-executive portfolio and I'm currently the Senior Independent Director of the JD Group, and serve as the Designated NED for Workforce Engagement – a role I particularly enjoy because it's an opportunity to help create an attractive and inclusive workplace for everyone. I have recently become Chair of Montirex Limited.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

Frankly, in the past – when my career was beginning in the 80's and 90's there wasn't any conversation! Today, companies are more aware than ever of recognising and celebrating the talent within their businesses. There are more programmes designed to develop and promote women in business and raise awareness from within. You can now see companies actively and systematically striving for organisational change which is benefiting the women who work for them. The Diversity in Retail forum – which JD is a founding member of – has done a lot in terms of helping to drive change. Not only is the general culture different but there's a movement, a step change, towards breaking down barriers in the sector. Things are definitely moving in the right direction.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

To be your true self. I gave myself this advice! It was pretty late in the day (by over 40 years), but in 2015 I came out. Being your authentic self at work was not an option for me in my

early working life, in those days it was career-ending to be openly gay. I wasted time and energy hiding my personal life. It's incredibly important to be yourself in life and at work and to put all of your energy into the right things. Thankfully these days at JD and in many other workplaces, inclusivity and diversity are welcomed and there is genuine effort being made to provide equal access to opportunities and resources. If you can be yourself, if you're fully supported and fully engaged, you will release your full potential – it's a win-win situation.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Find the sector you want to work in and are passionate about. When you find it, get a job in a company you really want to work for, one which values women. When you're there, work hard and don't undersell yourself or your achievements and don't be afraid to make your ambition known. Find a mentor who can guide and promote you – a sponsor. This is something I'm really passionate about – sponsors can act as your advocate within the company. I believe a mentor should be assigned to every individual who joins a company as a part of the onboarding process.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I'm a bit old for role models, but I suppose it's Rose Marcario, the ex-CEO of Patagonia, one of the world's most distinctive and innovative chief executives and a leader in responsible business.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Probably working in football – and if it was on the board of the FA or my

team Liverpool FC, I'd be delighted!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Sarina Wiegman – what a career. Just look at what she's achieved with the Lionesses. She's instilled integrity and humility in the team and transformed their prospects. On top of that, I suspect she's great fun and has a wicked sense of humour.

Marsha Smith

Company **IKEA** / Job Title **Deputy Country Retail Manager, UK & Ireland**



I have worked in leadership roles for almost 30 years across the automotive and retail industries. I love all aspects of leadership and enjoy seeing those around me grow and develop confidence. I am a strategic leader, skilled in developing

a long-term vision rooted in the every day. I am most proud of having developed strong succession across the country, particularly having grown our female and ethnic minority leaders.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I have always admired Karren Brady for her calm and determined strength in the face of adversity.

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

I am an avid news reader and I love learning. I enjoyed watching the BBC's *Once Upon a Time in Iraq*, which helped me to develop a better understanding around some of the causes of conflict in the Middle East.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I would definitely be a writer, I love writing. I hope I get to write a book one

day when I have more time!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Whilst AI can be daunting, I think it can offer opportunities to take away the less enjoyable work and ensure that jobs are meaningful and purposeful for human beings.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

I am a huge advocate for improving mental health, I have been inspired by the work Alice Hendy has been doing with Ripple – I would love to have the opportunity to spend more time together discussing how to continue making positive change.

What does success mean to you?

I'm a working mom as well as an ambitious and determined leader. Success for me is being enough in both areas. Sometimes I am a fantastic mom at the

expense of my work, and sometimes I am fantastic at work but I can't necessarily be present at home. Success is finding balance between these two, being a good role model in both areas. Plus taking good care of my health.

“ I've also undertaken reverse mentoring, and I learn a huge amount from connecting to the reality of our coworkers.

What do you predict for the future of retail?

I think the world is changing so fast, we need to be agile to adapt to the challenges around us. Retail is an amazing space to have a career, as it offers so many opportunities. Working in retail also offers a strong sense of community and while the world is developing digitally, community is always going to be important for humans – finding a dynamic omnichannel space isn't just about products, it's about interaction, inspiration and experience. No longer just shops!

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I value a leader with a genuine interest in me as a person, someone who inspires and can communicate a compelling vision. Trust is crucial, as well as the ability to encourage people to be their 100% authentic selves.

What impact have role models had on your life and career?

A huge amount, sometimes coming from unexpected directions. I have worked with incredible leaders and I always try to take a 'layer' from them to enhance my own leadership. I'm always learning. I've also undertaken reverse mentoring, and I learn a huge amount from connecting to the reality of our coworkers, who help me to understand if the work I am doing strategically is actually making a difference in the everyday.



Lucy Swinburn

Company WHSmith / Job Title Group Trading Director Books



I love retail... more specifically product! I started working in the industry as soon as I could, with a paper round at the age of 13, moving then to the front line at Debenhams as a sales assistant. Fostering this love of retail, I studied Retail Management at

Bournemouth University graduating with a first-class honors degree, and most importantly launching my career in buying. WHSmith adopted me from an early age, and 19 years on I am still here and loving it more than ever! My early years were spent in the stationery category, moving my way up the buying ranks.

After becoming a mum to Joshua (9) and Isabelle (6) I moved away from stationery into the books department. I am incredibly proud to have traded our way through the global pandemic where we fostered a real love of reading to our customers – the cheapest and best form of escapism you can buy. Last year, I took a giant leap from high street retail to travel retail, becoming Group Trading Director for Books. I am incredibly proud to be leading a fantastic commercial team of Buyers across the group, where our ambitions are to continue to drive a love of reading, be the number one destination for a great read and, more importantly, to get as many books into the hands of the 1 in 5 children who do not have a book of their own at home.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Role models have played a crucial role in shaping my life and career. From a young age I have been fortunate to have been around people who've inspired me and embodied qualities I've admired: perseverance from my father, structure and strength from my mother, creativity from my grandfather. Their examples inspired me to set high goals and strive for excellence in everything I do. In my career, mentors have provided guidance and support which have

helped me navigate challenges and seize opportunities. I objectively look for role models at every stage of my career and life, their influence has helped me develop professionally and instilled a sense of purpose and passion in my work and personal life.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I have six qualities which I value most in a leader and one day strive to be great at myself!

- Integrity: transparency and honesty, trust and respect.

QUICKFIRE

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Collaboration. I am really excited to see greater diversity, more inclusion and stronger relationships between the customer and the brand.

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

I love reading or watching anything that really makes me think. My go-to book is *5 Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni which has really helped focus me on how to lead and be a part of a healthy and highly performing team.



- Empathy: ensuring leaders understand and foster strong relationships.
- Vision: I find it so inspiring when a leader has a clear vision and can drive a team towards a common goal.
- Accountability: a leader shouldn't be afraid to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in! Taking responsibility for actions and decisions, and being reliable!
- Resilience: it is a tough world out there. A leader who remains composed, unphased by change, agile and adaptable is

one that can lead teams through anything which is incredibly inspiring for me!

- Finally, empowerment: I love it when a leader can encourage their team to grow, innovate and take initiative for themselves creating the ultimate culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Retiring with the knowledge that I have hit these six goals as a female leader would make me incredibly proud!

Sarah Taitt

Company **Wickes** / Job Title **Property Director**



Relecting on my journey within the retail landscape, I can vividly recall my first role as a Sales Assistant at John Lewis. The joy and satisfaction I derived from consistently delivering top-notch service and prioritising customer satisfaction hinted at

a destiny intertwined with the retail sector. While my academic pursuits led me to study Law at Nottingham and work in various legal capacities, the allure of the retail sector eventually beckoned.

Over a decade later, my love for retail has only deepened. Whilst working throughout the UK and the British Virgin Islands, I've had the privilege of contributing to diverse facets of the industry, spanning buying, supply chain, finance, property and transformation. Today, as the Property Director for Wickes, my responsibilities encompass acquisitions, construction, transformation, FM, and GNFR.

Joining the Wickes family marked a seamless transition, aligning with my values and collaborative leadership style. Wickes provides the ideal canvas for me to express my authentic self. Together, we embark on a transformative journey, redefining spaces and curating memorable experiences for our customers in the dynamic and ever-evolving home improvement sector.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I have so many but I draw so much inspiration from Viola Davis. Her journey has really helped me to navigate my own path towards success and fulfillment.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Young care leavers are resilient individuals who often navigate life without a safety net or the

recognition they deserve. If I wasn't immersed in the world of retail, I would be working passionately to shed light on their experiences and amplify their voices.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Maya Angelou – her eloquence and passion for social justice would create such a thought-provoking conversation.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

Elevating women leaders is essential for driving industry innovation and creating a workplace reflective of diverse perspectives. As a black leader, I recognise the power of representation in breaking down barriers. Highlighting women's achievements not only fosters inclusivity but also inspires the next generation of diverse leaders. By amplifying their voices, we reshape the narrative, ensuring our industry thrives on the strength of varied experiences and talents.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Embrace your uniqueness! I would tell my younger self, 'In every challenge lies opportunity. Your unique perspective is your power; use it to break ceilings and open doors'.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I aspire to redefine norms and pave the way for diversity in leadership. In the words of Maya Angelou, 'If you are always trying to be normal, you will

“ As a black leader, I recognise the power of representation in breaking down barriers.

never know how amazing you can be.' I want to be remembered for daring to be different and inspiring others to do the same.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The most valuable lesson in my career is that failure is not the end but a stepping-stone to greatness. Courage is the heart-beat of success and integrity the compass. In the face of challenges, I've learned that staying true to principles and learning from setbacks fuels not just personal growth, but the growth of a resilient, impactful legacy.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Your presence is not just welcomed; it's essential for reshaping our industry and creating spaces where diversity thrives.



Emily Tate

Company **Oak Furnitureland** / Job Title **Chief Financial Officer**



I studied Psychology and Physiology at Oxford University before training as a Chartered Accountant at PwC. I built a portfolio of retail clients and that helped me make my first move into industry when I joined B&Q after I qualified. I worked in commercial finance and

strategy roles before moving to Polo Ralph Lauren. I then joined FatFace as the Group FC before being promoted to the CFO role. That was my first experience of working in a PE-backed business, and I was attracted by the description the headhunter used of a 'head above the parapet' role, so much so that I have worked in that environment ever since! More recently I have been CFO at Office during the sale by Silverfleet to Truworths and Karen Millen. I am now at Oak Furnitureland, which I joined in 2020 after the acquisition by Davidson Kempner.



QUICKFIRE

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

Reading *Ultra Processed People* was eye-opening and has turned me into an obsessive food label checker.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I love sport and travel, so combining those is a dream for the future. My first goal would be to finish running the South West Coast Path. I've done some of it but still have 450 miles to go!

What first inspired you into a career in retail?

My first experience of working in retail was during my gap year between school and university. I worked in a Tie Rack shop in London with a group of people including an aspiring actor and a trainee barrister, as well as those who wanted a career in retail. I was patently unqualified to do so but remember being allowed to go and choose new products from the DC that I thought would sell in our store, which I thought was great! I learnt the basics about how a retail business operates and working in a pacy environment and one with tangible products is something that has been important to me ever since.

an organisation is very important. Whilst the proportion of women in senior roles has improved during my career, there is still much to be done to ensure that there are a greater number of women leaders in the top roles in businesses. Profiling women who have had interesting and varied careers helps to highlight the many different career paths that can be forged in this sector and provide inspiration and advice.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

1. Don't try to be perfect. Striving for perfectionism can be inhibiting. Good enough is usually good enough.
2. Embrace difficult situations. Take risks. Resilience is super important.
3. Have some goals but be flexible with the route you take. It's not the job title on the page, it's the experiences that you have and what you actually deliver that matter.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

The retail sector makes a significant contribution to the economy and employs three million people. Representing that broad range of employees and customers in decision-making positions within



Hayley Tatum

Company **Asda** / Job Title **Chief People and Corporate Affairs Officer**



Currently Chief People and Corporate Affairs Director at Asda and the longest serving member of the Board, I have worked in retail my whole career. I started as a part-time checkout operator for Tesco and discovered a passion for

the industry, eventually working my way up to Chief HR Officer. I moved to Asda in 2011 to lead the HR team, and I now work directly for the shareholders following the sale of the business from Walmart to the Issa brothers and private equity. As a leading HR practitioner, I have an honorary doctorate in HR and hold companion status with the CIPD. I am always keen to give back, and I'm a former Non-Executive Director for the Department of Work and Pensions, and currently an ambassador for the Apprenticeship Network and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. I have also recently accepted a role on the Together Steering Committee. As a breast cancer survivor, I am a keen fundraiser for Breast Cancer Awareness and take great pride in the fantastic achievements of Asda's Tickled Pink and the contribution we make to our charity partners. I also act as a charity trustee and RemCo chair for both Grocery Aid and Tommys.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My Dad, he never gives up.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Some kind of teaching. I love learning and watching people grow and surprise themselves with new skills.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Attitudes and advances in sustainability and the impact retail and supply chains can have on climate change.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

As a sector we employ tens of thousands of women and serve millions every week. Having senior leadership roles occupied by women sharing their experiences and views is essential for the business to be relatable and representative.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I've worked in the sector since I was 18 years old and have always loved the career opportunities and 'risks' taken on colleagues early in their careers; but the emphasis has definitely changed in the last decade. Inclusion is purposeful with intentional strategies to encourage all voices to be heard, so talent spotting and colleague experiences can be refined

so everyone in our business feels welcome and safe to belong and be part of our team. I am very proud to have been part of this change too.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I have continued to study and learn throughout my working life. As a large employer, giving colleagues the chance to continue to add to their skills and achieve qualifications helps them grow their confidence, self-esteem, and well-being. Whether that propels a colleague forward to take a bigger and more rewarding role in the company, or simply enables them to support their own children with homework and career choices. That's a legacy I would love to leave.

Kate Williams

Company **Dunelm** / Job Title **Director of Commercial Development**



After studying Finance at university, I joined Rolls Royce on their CIMA Graduate Scheme, and began my career in finance, partnering with different areas of the business including manufacturing and strategy.

Ten years ago, I broadened my experience by moving into retail and joined the Dunelm commercial finance department, soon realising this sector was where I wanted to continue my career. The fast-paced environment was very different, it was brilliant to work alongside talented teams of people, passionate about the products they are designing and creating for customers.

I then had the opportunity to join the commercial team as the Commercial Development Director. In this role I lead the central functions across product quality & returns, ethical & sustainability, stock management and our exciting Commercial Transformation Programme.

Throughout my career I have had the pleasure of working with talented and passionate people who have helped develop my skills and thinking, enabling me to grow and develop. Rewardingly, I am now in a position where I can help others to reach their full potential.

Outside of work I love spending time with family and friends, particularly my partner Chris, my two children Mia and Joey, and our two dogs who keep us busy!



What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Being open to trying new things, understanding my strengths, asking for help and taking opportunities as they arise has been invaluable. This has enabled me to broaden my experiences outside

finance, where I built my career for 15 years. It's also important to be ok with failure and actively learn from mistakes, it's the best way to learn.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Be yourself! Have more confidence in your own

QUICKFIRE

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

I recently listened to a podcast with Yuval Noah Harari, about what the future holds for our species and how AI will have a significant effect on everything we know today, the skills we will need for the future of our species and how story telling is so important. Very thought provoking!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Elton John! I have many fond memories of gigs,

travelling with friends and family, the conversation around the dinner table would be awesome!

Who is your role model?

I couldn't name just one person. I'm very fortunate to have had many people in my life who have helped to shape who I am today. I have worked with some amazing leaders, who have mentored and coached me along the way. Above all, seeing my dad's achievement throughout his career and then my daughter's drive and ambition as she has gone through her education and starting university has been an inspiration.

abilities and celebrate your successes, stop focusing on what you think you can't do. I've found that building strong relationships and forming a good network around me has given me more insight and diverse ways of thinking. It's been such a support as I have moved through my career. If I had my chance again, I would do this much earlier. And finally, be brave and have a go, grab hold of opportunities even if you think you aren't ready.

“ I've found that building strong relationships and forming a good network around me has given me more insight and diverse ways of thinking.

a tap on the shoulder, someone else believing in my capabilities, for me to have the courage to move into senior leadership.

I'm hoping that by using this opportunity to share my story and my vulnerabilities, I can support the next generation in building the courage to step up and go for it!

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

I feel honored and grateful to be considered as a Woman to Watch in retail. I have struggled with a feeling I don't belong "at the table" and with imposter syndrome. It took



Anujah de Wit

Company Sainsbury's / Job Title Director of Fresh Foods Supply Chain



I was born and partly raised in Sri Lanka before moving to the UK with my family to start a totally new life, adapt to new language and a very different culture. This part of my life has definitely shaped the person I am today. I am a leader who yearns to learn, to adapt

and to problem solve and to deliver transformational change in our evolving retail sector. Growing talent and nurturing diversity in the next generation of leaders is a personal goal that I am very passionate about.

I have been in the retail industry for 20 years, having completed a degree in Economics. I have had the chance to stretch myself across varied roles and functions including corporate strategy, end to end customer experience and leading large-scale business transformations. My current role is the Director of Supply Chain Fresh Foods. My role is a fast-paced operation, transformational and strategic.

The best role I have though is being a mum. I have two young kids, which really challenges my thinking and pushes me to answer the 'why'. I'm just enjoying watching them grow and become who they are meant to be.



“ I need to be on a constant learning curve with regular moments of discomfort to have total job fulfilment.

a professional perspective, being mentally stretched and challenged daily in a role that I love is what success means to me. I have learnt that I need to be on a constant learning curve with regular moments of discomfort to have total job fulfillment.

The second part is making sure I have the right balance at home for my family, ensuring I can be the mum I want to be.

When both come together, I feel successful.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

I have learnt this more recently rather than early on in my career and that is 'just to be me'. It is such an easy thing to say but it has taken me a while to get there. To be comfortable in my skin, in my upbringing, in my schooling, to recognise my diversity of thinking, to appreciate my vulnerability. I am less and less worried about comparing how I stack up to the person next to me and increasingly focused on sharing more of me. It is amazing just how many people appreciate me being me.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

One piece of advice I keep close to the heart is, 'cream always rises to the top'. A lot of us experience self-doubt, go into modes of comparing career positions to one's peers as an example, but this advice is all about encouraging self-belief in yourself, being confident in your own skin, understanding your capability and knowing that when it's the right time, your development, progression will come (sometimes you must make it happen). The phrase has helped me gain perspective.

What does 'success' mean to you?

To me personally it falls into two parts. Firstly, from

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My Dad. The best supporter for my sister and I to do more, try different things. His philosophy in life was kindness, and to work hard and to play harder.

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

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

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Events planning! I love planning gatherings and making food, especially cakes!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

We are actively looking to bring in diversity of thinking, culture and skill set into our sector. That's brilliant.



Clare Wright

Company **Jardine Motors Group** / Job Title **Former Chief People Officer**



Having previously held senior roles across multiple sectors, I made the move from a global software company to automotive retailer Jardine Motors Group in 2015. I have since been instrumental in the transformation of the business, the Group

HR Function, and development of JMGs inclusive culture and EDI strategy. I have been recognised within the industry and beyond, achieving accolades including HRO's HR Director of the Year, Automotive 30% Club Inclusive Leader award, and I've previously been recognised in Autocar's Great British Women list.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

For others to have 'real' models that they can see have achieved and inspire them to do the same.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in retail? How can we overcome them?

There are not enough senior women in c-suite roles for younger women to look to. And there is also still lots to do around flexible working options.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

A great deal. You have to see people who have achieved, who are similar to you, to believe you can do it. I have learnt from many different role models, taking the best behaviours from them and learning from their mistakes.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Never be told you can't do something. Always challenge and speak up for what you believe in. Don't try to be someone else, be comfortable with who you are. And always be curious.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I'd like to help more individuals from diverse backgrounds into senior roles, especially women, as this is still lacking in many spaces. I'd like to be remembered for continuing to challenge the status quo and always taking action to make improvements.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Making a lasting difference.



What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Authenticity. The ability to really connect with people. Having clarity of vision. Collaboration.

“ I'd like to be remembered for continuing to challenge the status quo.”

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My Dad.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

To see the changes in the consumer model really aiding forward movement on diversity and inclusion.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I would have loved to have been a TV presenter.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Emmeline Pankhurst.



Aalish Yorke-Long

Company **Neptune** / Job Title **Chief Executive Officer**



An experienced leader in design and retail, I joined Neptune from Soho House, where I was Managing Director of Retail for 6.5 years, launching the industry's fastest growing homeware brand, Soho Home. It was a time of rapid expansion, and I

led the development and launch of the online business as well as the Soho Home Studios in both in the US and UK. During my time at Soho House, I was also custodian of the much-loved Cowshed brand and launched the new science-led skincare brand Soho Skin. Prior to Soho House I was head of e-commerce at activewear retailer Sweaty Betty, a female-founded global activewear brand for women.

In November of 2022, at 38 years old, I joined leading British interiors and lifestyle brand, Neptune, as the company's first CEO.

I am responsible for the day-to-day management of Neptune, a vertically integrated whole home retailer and manufacturer, and leading the brand through its next stage of growth, overseeing 820 colleagues globally across Stores, our Support Office, Manufacturing and Distribution. Over the past 14 months, I have curated a senior leadership team to draw on combined experience across the luxury retail and high-end interiors sectors to help reinvigorate the Neptune brand at an exciting time in its history.

As a female CEO, I'm proud to say that Neptune were included in the J.P. Morgan Private Bank Top Women-Powered Businesses for 2023. We are fortunate to have an incredible team of women, represented at all levels across the business at Neptune and I feel privileged to lead them.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

It is incredible to me that in 2023, the UN Commission on the status of women announced that gender equality is moving backwards. As things stand they estimate it will take 300 years to correct that imbalance. I grew up in the 1980s, under the UK's first female prime minister. The era of power hair and power

suits, it felt like women had conquered the world. And yet 40 years later I so often find myself to be the only woman in the room where the decisions are being made. As a mother of two daughters, I find that lack of progress very upsetting. We must take every opportunity to raise awareness and spotlight the enormously positive impact diversity of all kinds at board level can bring to business.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

I've been so fortunate to work alongside many brilliant and brilliantly successful people and have picked up a library of advice along the way, but here are some stand out above the rest:

- Surround yourself with people who have a different perspective to you. The more perspectives you can bring to a challenge the more likely you are to find the best outcome (not to mention personal enrichment).
- Always hire people who are smarter than you. I have stuck to this advice throughout my career and every day I have my perspective shifted by someone in my team who is undoubtedly far smarter than I am.
- Set clear goals, then prioritise ruthlessly – as

we move through the ranks and become more senior there are more and more calls on our time. In order to deliver successfully on the mission you must have a plan, with very clear goals and timelines, then prioritise ruthlessly, no one else can do that for you. Your time is precious, use it wisely.

- Trust your gut – always respect and take time to consider the data, and consult with as many different opinions as you can, but at the end of the day trust your gut.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Have more fun with it!

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Clarity of thought, compassion and humility.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I'm not sure I believe in having one role model. Life has too many layers to look for one person to tick every box. I prefer a pic 'n' mix approach to my inspiration!

I count Ellen McArthur, Michelle Obama, Sienna Miller and the late Queen among my role models. As you can imagine all for very different reasons.

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

I subscribe to Tortoise Media, a "slow news" podcast that covers world news in depth, rather than traditional media which focuses more on headlines and superficial coverage. I love their Daily Sensemaker, The Newsroom and The Slow Newscast shows.



Women to Watch in Technology and Engineering

Inspiring women pushing
boundaries in tech

The HTL and retail sectors are becoming increasingly innovative, and utilising technology to drive efficiency and creativity. Over the past few months, we have identified women in technology roles who are having a game-changing impact on

their sectors, and highlighted their career journeys in this section. This list is not exhaustive, nor ranked in any way, but has been brought together to celebrate those making moves in this traditionally male-dominated area.



Stella Marie Alamil

Company ISS A/S / Job Title CIO Europe & Global Key Accounts



I am a global leader aspiring to be a force for change, creating equal opportunities through technology, education, and storytelling. An Economics major and Harvard Business School alumna, I started my career as a Management Trainee in AP Møller Maersk Philippines,

and since then have held various leadership roles across cultures, geographies, and four industries.

Today I serve as CIO Europe & Global Key Accounts at ISS A/S, a leading facility management and workplace experience company headquartered in Denmark. I also lead ISS Tech Portugal, the company's first-ever software development entity. In the era of AI, I believe that diverse and inclusive leadership and technology teams become even more fundamental to building an accessible world of work and tech solutions. Having the privilege of a global platform, I actively promote women in tech, educate on the various tech profession opportunities, and speak up as to why gender balance is important. If we will not own the narrative, then who? If we do not champion this now, then when?

On a personal note, I love to travel and enjoy food, wine, and experiencing new cultures. In 2021, I have self-published a coffee table art and poetry collection that celebrates the joys of being a woman.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

One of the role models I have is my uncle, Jhune Ramirez. He teaches me the value of hard work, humility, and living a life full of respect and love.

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

I often listen to Steve Job's Stanford Commencement Speech, and read Maya Angelou's *Phenomenal Woman*.

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

If God was so kind to have given me an excellent singing voice, I would love to be a singer/songwriter.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The power of data, digital, and technology and how it is transforming facility management and workplace experience.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Despite the many great initiatives in this area, there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve gender balance. According to the Global Gender Gap Report in 2023 published by the World Economic Forum, women's participation in the workforce is slipping globally, and other markers of economic opportunity were showing substantive disparities between men and women. It is important to constantly shape the narrative and insist on being seen and heard to achieve gender balance.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Role models are the giants whose shoulders I stand on. They inspire, challenge, and boost my confidence to live

a meaningful life so that others may stand on my shoulders too.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success is an opportunity to become a better version of ourselves every day, in service of others.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

For being a force for change. ISS A/S is a people business. I have 350,000 colleagues worldwide, and approximately 100,000 are moved out of poverty every year because of a job in ISS. In a world that is becoming increasingly digital, I champion humanities in technology leadership and deliver accessible, adaptable, and capability-enhancing solutions.

Kirsty Bennett

Company **Bentley Motors** / Job Title **Chief Information Officer**



As the Chief Information Officer at Bentley Motors, I have been leading the transformation and optimisation of the IT function, together with building new capabilities in IT architecture, data and delivery agility across the global luxury automotive

brand. With over 30 years of experience in various IT leadership roles, I have developed strong expertise in IT strategy and business change and transformation in multiple sectors and industries.

My mission is to build high performing and engaged teams, who enable and empower the business to achieve its goals and vision, as a result of collaboratively delivering innovative and effective IT solutions, products, data enablement and services. I have successfully implemented industry standard best practices such as SAFe, MoP, and ITIL, and managed complex and large-scale projects and programs with budgets up to 500 million and teams up to 350.

I have also established and maintained senior stakeholder and customer relationships, and fostered a culture of collaboration, agility, and excellence among my teams. I am passionate about making #ITHappen and creating value for the organization and its customers.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

As I previously mentioned, I have had many role models at various stages in my career. An important note on this would be that they have always been people I have got to know on a more personal level too. It has always been important to me not to put people on a pedestal for the values they think they have, but the ones they do have. These have often been tested, but their conviction and belief made them role models for me.

What first inspired you into a career in retail?

Virgin Atlantic, more years ago than I care to remember, first inspired me into the hospitality sector. The bravery, the boldness, and the boundary pushing were incredible. It is a great feeling when you are part of a team developing and delivering a tangible service or product that people have dreamt of, saved for or waited a lifetime for. With travel, it can unite families who have never met or take people on a trip of a lifetime. With retail, it might be something they have saved for forever that will become a family heirloom... and so much more.

“When things go wrong, don't let it get you down, but dust yourself off.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Humility, humor, honesty and trust.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

When things go wrong, don't let it get you down,

but dust yourself off, learn from it and move on with a smile.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Don't consider it any longer, just embrace it. You will see places in the world you did not know existed, you will experience a multi-cultural and diverse environment of passionate, professional, and profound leaders and you will learn so much about yourself, the world, and the amazing industry.

QUICKFIRE

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

Allie K Miller is a legend in the AI space – check her out on LinkedIn, there's lots to read and watch.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Travel has always been my passion, since being a young school leaver and wanting to work as Cabin Crew for Virgin Atlantic. Ultimately, if I can make a difference to people, have fun and be my authentic self, and add benefit to a company who values their people, I would be doing something I love. One day I hope to have a portfolio career, allowing me to work across different verticals where

I have a passion: animals, children, education, travel, technology; that would be my Ikigai.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

I would love to be able to have a family dinner with my grandad, who passed away when I was 21. He was a father figure to me when I was growing up, my parents divorced when I was only three. He was the apple of my eye, my hero, and always pushed me and believed in me when I had little belief in myself. I would just like one evening with him and with my daughter, who was born ten months after he passed, to see what he thinks of how we are both doing. Much of the stoic advice he gave stays with me to this day.

Paulina Bohdanowicz-Godfrey

Company **Hilton** / Job Title **Senior Director Energy & Environment EMEA**



I have always been passionate about the environment and feel privileged to have the opportunity to drive sustainable change across the Hilton EMEA hotels. I am an environmental protection and sustainable energy engineer and my journey

with hospitality started in Stockholm over two decades ago. Whilst working on my PhD thesis I connected with Scandic and Hilton, where I realised hospitality is an industry that provides a great conduit to make a positive change to global environmental wellbeing. I was offered an opportunity to manage and develop a digital environmental reporting platform (the predecessor to Hilton's LightStay) and got a real taste for the difference I could make through this sector. On completion of some university lecturing commitments in Sweden and Poland, I returned to Hilton, where my role has continued to evolve.

I currently oversee environmental advisory, governance and reporting for 250+ hotels, about \$130 million worth of energy contracting and procurement, resource efficiency improvement solutions, carbon reduction strategies focused on nearly 700 thousand tonnes of carbon, as well as team member engagement and personal development programmes in engineering and sustainability. I do consider myself to be 'the E in ESG (environmental, social and governance)' and occupy a niche in between the three 'E' worlds of environment, energy and engineering. I am also a published author including a book with Rebecca Hawkins entitled "*Responsible Hospitality: Theory and practice.*"

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in tech?

We have many examples that women can successfully lead in every sector, but it is important to regularly keep reminding the rest of the world about this. Women themselves also need to be inspired and encouraged to consider opportunities in HTL. Ultimately, we

bring diverse and unique perspectives to the table if we are given equal opportunities.

What does 'success' mean to you?

I am all about people and planet, I love seeing talent develop and progress, so witnessing members of my team grow professionally and be recognised by the business is my definition

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My former managers Darren Cook and Jan Peter Bergkvist for guiding my passion for guiding people and planet in a business environment.

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

Developing new talent whilst at a university.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Environmental sustainability on the agendas of CEOs and CFOs.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

My father, to continue conversations that remain opened.

of success. Three of my former interns are now with the company and two of my young talents achieved a director position before they turned 30.

Another measure of success is knowing that even small pro-environmental improvements we recommend, when taken up by all the people that we touch, result in a massive positive ripple effect globally. I am very proud of the Travel with Purpose engagement of our Team Members.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I aim to help transition our portfolio of hotels to net zero operations and to improve the diversity and inclusion within the engineering departments across our hotels. Both interventions require a

mindset shift among the stakeholders that needs to be facilitated by awareness raising, technical and economic feasibility, as well as mentoring and coaching.

Together with my amazing team we have been developing and providing tools and support to facilitate these changes.

What would say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Go for it, especially if you love people, want variety and to make a positive impact. Hospitality offers limitless opportunities to interact with people, learn about and from individuals and cultures. The variety of activities – two days are never the same – lets the scope of action be as wide as you want it to be if you are open and keen to take the challenge. You can define your own career path.



Poonam Chauhan

Company **Moto Hospitality** / Job Title **Head of Technology Operations**



I am a dedicated technology leader committed to leading transformative initiatives with a strong focus on a people-centric approach. Currently the Head of Technology Operations at Moto Hospitality, I lead for happiness, am a wellbeing champion

and lead the race and ethnicity colleague resource group. My extensive background in overseeing global IT services and operations spans diverse sectors, including retail, airports, FTSE 100 companies, and the public sector.

Fueled by a passion for diversity in STEM, I actively contribute to initiatives promoting inclusivity and equality. I am pursuing an Msc in Management and Leadership at Cranfield School of Management, with a continued commitment to continuous growth. Recognitions include being a finalist for the Women in IT Transformation Leader of the Year 2020 award, achieving SDI Improvement Project of the Year in 2020, and being a finalist in Excellence in STEM in 2022. I am also recognised as a LinkedIn Top Voice in IT operations.

QUICKFIRE

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

I envision myself immersed in a dynamic and compassionate environment, in non-profit work, specifically for individuals facing terminal illnesses or significant health challenges. This choice is deeply rooted in a personal experience during my 20s, where I lost a dear friend to a brain tumor. Witnessing this firsthand inspires me to actively contribute.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I am excited about the impact that innovation and artificial intelligence can have on our society.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

My grandad who is no longer with us but was a huge feminist, an excellent scholar, and incredibly smart and visionary way beyond his time.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I am honored to be nominated. Advocacy and allyship for women and diversity are integral to my journey. The recognition of my achievements is a great honour especially to be included alongside so many inspirational women. I aspire to inspire others, particularly those grappling with self-doubt. In STEM, I strive to defy norms not only as a woman but also across various dimensions of diversity, such as personality, socio-economic background, education, and ethnicity.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

By highlighting women leaders, we challenge traditional gender norms and promote DE&I in leadership. It demonstrates that success in this field is attainable for everyone, regardless of apparent differences.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

Leaders traditionally are seen as assertive figures, possessing strong characteristics. I want to redefine leadership by embracing qualities that go beyond conventional stereotypes. I aspire to be acknowledged as someone who delivers but also nurtures creativity, encourages innovation, and values diversity. I believe in managing and

“ Embrace your uniqueness; resist the urge to conform.

leading for happiness, a strategy that leads to increased productivity, high retention rates, and a lasting impact.

What impact have role models had on your life and career?

My role models are my parents, immigrants to the UK who faced the challenges of raising children in an unfamiliar environment. Despite the disparities between their world and ours, they demonstrated that hard work, determination, and overcoming challenges shape one's character. As a first-generation Brit, they instilled in me resilience, a strong work ethic, essential life skills, and a sense of uniqueness. Working tirelessly, seven days a week, and rising before sunrise, they exemplified the values of commitment and sacrifice. They ensured we never lacked necessities and strived to provide us with access to the world through travel, educational resources, and diverse experiences. While we may not have had extravagant clothing or dined at upscale restaurants, my parents prioritised exposing us to the latest technology and innovative products, travel and fostering a rich and varied upbringing that set them apart from many people from a similar culture in our generation.

Elizabeth Colon

Company **Travel + Leisure Co.** / Job Title **SVP, Enterprise Data & Strategic Analytics**



My name is Elizabeth “Liz” Colon, and I am Senior Vice President of Enterprise Data and Strategic Analytics for Travel + Leisure Co. Information Technology (IT). I lead and guide key functions toward creation of incremental earnings

by using data as a strategic organisational asset. Our work is instrumental in identifying and analysing the company’s business drivers and aligning a systems and data strategy to support them. I assumed this role in 2023, bringing 28 years of technology experience with technical and leadership skills in architecture, digital, data and Software as a Service (SaaS) product delivery. In 2019, I joined Travel + Leisure Co. as Senior Director, Solutions Architecture – Wyndham Destinations. In 2021, I was promoted to Vice President of Enterprise Architecture, where I led the development of a comprehensive IT strategy and business/technology roadmaps, aligning technology initiatives with the overarching business goals and objectives.

I grew up in Miami, Florida, and earned my Bachelor of Arts in Management Information Systems from Florida International University in Miami. When I am not strategising or designing technology, I enjoy spending time with my family or inspiring the next generation of technologists by volunteering in the community.

QUICKFIRE

What is the most interesting thing you’ve read, watched or heard recently?

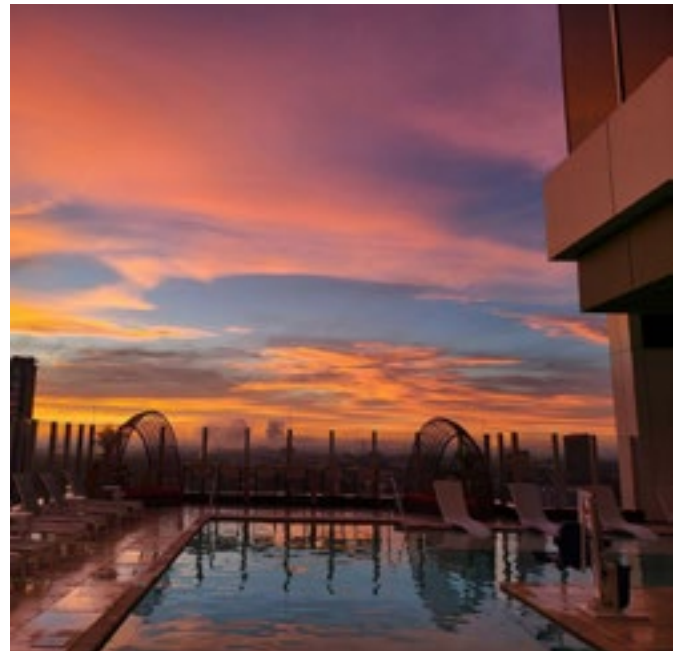
The impact that Generative AI will bring to travel.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The ability to innovate.

If you weren’t working in HTL, what would you be doing?

Either technology consulting or returning to the technology sector and delivering technology products as a service.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Believe in yourself, trust your instincts, and find your voice. Don’t worry about the small things – those tend to pass as fast as they come.

the value of data. I would like to be remembered for changing the game.

What first inspired you into a career in HTL?

The opportunity to apply my technical knowledge toward innovation while surrounded by a culture that encourages going on and putting the world on vacation.

What does ‘success’ mean to you?

Success means that I have inspired others by doing what I love, continuously learning to do it well, and finding joy along the way.

“ Don’t worry about the small things, those tend to pass as fast as they come.”

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

To improve our guests’ experience by unlocking

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

An opportunity to inspire future leaders.



Jeannette Copeland

Company **Ann Summers** / Job Title **Technology Director**



I joined the Ann Summers Board in March 2022 and, as Technology Director, am responsible for the service delivery, data, architecture and security across the business. Technical debt has been a key area of focus for me since joining Ann Summers, as well as

delivering new capabilities, and designing processes and governance to provide visibility of the many opportunities for technology utilisation.

I have worked in retail for the last ten years, starting at Joules, where I worked my way up the ladder through various technology and IT roles. I was the Director of IT for six years and was heavily involved in overseeing data integration whilst also gaining extensive retail industry knowledge during the process. Some of the other skills I developed, and continue to utilise day-to-day, include IT strategy development, budgeting, business intelligence, data mining, quality assurance, business analysis and delivery. Prior to starting in retail, I worked in an analyst and leadership capacity heading up the ecommerce and data functions at Systemax Europe, an IT reseller.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

When I first started my career 25 years ago, no one discussed gender, it wasn't really a "thing". Being a woman in a male dominated profession has not come without its challenges – in the beginning it was seen as odd, and I was treated like "one of the boys." What excites me is the apparent progress and push for more women in tech, which brings diversity and positivity to the sector.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

A great piece of advice that has influenced my leadership style came

from another female leader. In an early role, I was struggling to achieve cohesion and enthusiasm within my team and my colleague said: "people are like banks, you have to make a deposit before you make a withdrawal." This will stay with me forever as it highlights the importance of collaboration and teamwork.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Like many other women, when I was younger, I struggled with self-confidence for a long time. Other inspirational individuals throughout my careers at both Ann Summers and Joules have helped me to realise that my inner critic was exceptionally strong, leading me to doubt my

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Our CEO, Maria Hollins. She has a keen eye for detail and a sympathetic nature but remains extremely focused and has great clarity around the Ann Summers vision.

If you weren't working in Retail, what would you be doing?

I would be a SCUBA instructor - it's been a passion of mine for over 25 years!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I'm very excited about generative AI and the opportunities it brings to the sector from an efficiency perspective. There is the misconception that generative AI is a threat, but if you understand it, I think it's quite exciting and presents an opportunity to support high value work within the retail sector.



abilities. My inner critic is still strong, but I use that inner voice to think about how I achieve more. Tech is still male dominated, but I think the awareness of the need for gender diversity is so much higher, which I love!

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I want to ensure people understand the uniqueness of technology – it is not a one size fits all approach. An education piece is

needed when discussing technology within retail and I can contribute to this. In addition, I would like to be remembered as a great leader who lives by the values of honesty, fairness and collaboration. It is important to deliver on strategy and promises, a characteristic I try to instill in my colleagues at Ann Summers.

“ It is important to deliver on strategy and promises.

Isabelle Droll

Company **TUI Group** / Job Title **CIO Holiday Experience, Corporate & Sustainability**



After my MBA studies in France, Germany and at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, I started a career in HTL. I worked first in the finance department of a tour operator in Germany, responsible for controlling and IT in France at Nouvelles Frontieres, and I had

diverse leaderships responsibilities at TUI. As CIO Holiday Experience, Corporate & Sustainability I am a member of the TUI Group IT Board. My responsibility lies in efficiently delivering technology to ensure TUI's customers have a happy holiday experience, by enhancing the digital customer experience and ensuring operational excellence as well as technology innovation.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL? How can we overcome them?

The main roadblocks to inclusion in HTL are unconscious bias, the lack of diversity in leadership, and the lack of confidence of some underrepresented groups. To overcome these roadblocks we need to raise awareness of these challenges, and train and coach leaders. It is also necessary to measure diversity, set goals and report successes.

“ It is necessary to measure diversity, set goals and report successes.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Love what you do. Enjoy the process and not only the victory.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Honesty, decision maker, empathy, willingness to fail and learn out of failure.

What would say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

The HTL industry offers a wide range of opportunities to work in areas such as hotels, airlines, retail and cruises but also all functions, like IT, HR, finance and sustainability. The industry is known for its fast-paced and dynamic

QUICKFIRE

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

Peter Hinssen speaking about the idea of Never Normal.

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

Working as an architect.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Making travelling a force for good.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Barack and Michelle Obama.

Who is your role model?

Martina Navratilova.



environment, where no two days are the same. It provides the opportunity to work with people from all over the world, learn about different cultures, and make a positive and sustainable

impact on people's lives. For the customers who are travelling and the people in the destinations. There are many opportunities for growth and advancement in the industry.

Beth Gildersleve

Company Flutter UK & Ireland / Job Title MD Technology Brand Experience



Post-university, my career started in communications and human resources, with no defined career path. An opportunity (thanks to a female champion) emerged to move into IT, and 24 years later I am still in technology – after holding roles at The Post Office,

the NHS and Sky Betting and Gaming – as MD Technology Brand Experience in Flutter UK & Ireland.

In this role, I oversee a 500-strong technology team dedicated to providing exceptional customer experiences to millions of customers every week, across three powerhouse brands: Paddy Power, Betfair, and Sky Betting & Gaming. I am also the technology lead for a critical business transformational programme, driving innovation and excellence in the technology. I take pride in being the first female appointed to the tech director position and later advancing to the role of managing director in Flutter UKI. I love the fast paced, innovative environment and the passion to responsibly provide exciting product experiences to our customers. I am a passionate champion and mentor for women in tech. My goal is to empower more individuals to break into a career in technology by demystifying the breadth of the field, highlighting that it's not solely about coding!



What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

That you have to push yourself out of your comfort zone in order to grow. Reflecting on my career, the roles I initially hesitated to take on or didn't think I could handle are the ones that now fill me with personal pride and are where I can share my journey and growth.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Vision that I can actively contribute to, an open and honest approach and someone supportive and able to push me to be my best self.

What does being a Woman to Watch in Tech mean to you?

It's an honour, one I take personal pride in, especially as an inspiration to my daughter. I hope that my journey might inspire not only those in my current industry but also future generations of women aiming to break barriers and pursue their aspirations.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Two pieces of advice:

1. Don't worry if you don't have a five-year plan, if you are open to new challenges, you will grow and thrive! Just believe in yourself, give it a go, and speak up more.
2. Being a working mum is hard but you can do it, the support is there. Don't feel guilty if you have to leave early or prioritise a school nativity. It paves the way and normalises this for other working parents.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Go for it! More diversity in the industry is needed, particularly in the digital space. It's fast paced, exciting and innovative, we need diversity of thought, to challenge the status quo and bring in fresh ideas. Customer behaviours and habits are changing, and this industry provides an opportunity to really understand our customers and drive change to improve their experience.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mum, raising me and my two brothers as a single parent, showing me resilience and self-belief in times of adversity.

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

That you cannot melt a Flake bar!

I also really enjoyed reading the Alison Weir *Six Tudor Queens* books.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I'm excited to see how technology advancements, such as augmented and virtual reality and AI, can be applied to our products, and how customer respond to this.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Queen Elizabeth I.



Alison Gillham

Company **McDonald's UK & Ireland** / Job Title **Vice President, Technology & Change**



I was appointed VP, Technology & Change in October 2021. The role involves working closely with our franchisees and suppliers in the UK & Ireland, as well as our global teams, to enable seamless technology experiences for our crew and customers across 1,500

restaurants. I am also responsible for ensuring our overall change plan for the market is deliverable, and that our biggest strategic projects are delivered on time, to budget and to the right level of quality. Starting at Accenture, consulting and working on delivering and deploying CRM and other marketing tech systems, I have over 20 years' experience in driving technology and business-focused transformation within organisations across a number of sectors, including financial services, utilities, housing and hospitality. Prior to joining McDonald's as the Change Director in November 2020, I'd worked with brands including Costa Coffee and Whitbread. I am a people-person and take great pride in watching my team thrive, grow and have fun whilst delivering the best possible business outcomes. I am also incredibly passionate about driving equity for women, acting as co-chair of the Global Women In Technology network and Exec Chair for our UK & Ireland Women's Network.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

In my earlier consulting days, there were very few women in senior positions and there was no-one to look up to. By putting a spotlight on female leaders, younger women can see that taking on a senior role in a hospitality business is possible – in turn I hope that this will improve gender equity and balance over the years to come.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success for me is about making a difference; developing and nurturing talent; creating fun and high-performing teams, whilst also delivering great business outcomes. At home, it's about being present for my two teenage children and husband as well as taking time to enjoy the things I love like walking, travel and reading.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Someone who leads by example, who genuinely cares about their people, is honest and does what they say they are going to do. Someone who is also authentic, humble and vulnerable enough show their truly human side. Plus, someone who is motivating and inspiring. As a mum of two teenagers, I also value leaders who put their families first, above all else.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

Do it! Having worked in Financial Services, Utilities and the Housing sectors for a significant part of my career, I didn't realise what I'd been missing out on. It's a fun, fast-paced sector and I love that, as consumers, we can tangibly experience the changes we are making.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

I love Michelle Obama – she's strong, intelligent, successful, funny and clearly a people and family person too. On a personal level, my mum – if she hadn't encouraged me to work hard, be independent and have faith in my own ability, I wouldn't be where I am now.

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

Mr Bates vs the Post Office. I hadn't appreciated the magnitude and devastation of the Post Office IT scandal until

watching the drama.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Seeing how new technology like AI will change the customer experience.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

David Attenborough because he's a legend! His incredible knowledge on wildlife, ecology and the environment as well as the stories he could share from his many adventures and experiences would make him a brilliant guest.



Alice Goodwin

Company **Virgin Atlantic** / Job Title **Avionics Design & Development Engineer**



I am an Avionics Design & Development Engineer specialising on the A350 at Virgin Atlantic. In my role, I am responsible for fleet maintenance activities to ensure the maximum safety, compliance, and reliability of aircraft systems. I first joined Virgin Atlantic as a Flight

Operations Engineer during my Aerospace Engineering degree and later moved into the engineering and maintenance team. Alongside completing my master's in Engineering Management, I began specialising in avionics.

I have been passionate about the aviation and travel industry since aged 17 when I got my Private Pilot's license on a scholarship and since then have used my knowledge and opportunities to help give young people from underrepresented backgrounds a chance to make a start in aviation. I am a speaker and mentor for numerous organisations trying to remove barriers for underrepresented groups in aviation and took part in WiHTL's inaugural Ethnic Future Leader's Programme.

I was recently selected as an Aviation Ambassador by the Department for Transport alongside my role as an avionics engineer at Virgin Atlantic. As an aviation ambassador, my role is to raise the profile of the aviation sector, deliver outreach activities, and unlock more career pathways for young people entering the aviation and travel industry.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

I am really grateful to be included in this list. For me, being a Woman to Watch in HTL is to be a role model and example for anybody

wanting to enter the sector. I want people to believe that there are others with similar backgrounds and journeys who have made it into the industry and work in engineering so they believe that they can do it too.

“ I truly believe uniqueness is the key to innovation in the aviation sector.

What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

The best professional advice I received was to get a mentor and I have been really fortunate to have some incredible mentors

QUICKFIRE

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

I recently heard the quote "Talent is equally distributed, opportunity is not", and it really resonated with me about the importance of creating opportunities for people coming up the career ladder.

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

If I wasn't working in the travel and aviation industry, I would be a graphic designer. I like the

idea of using visuals to communicate ideas.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I am excited to see how the travel and aviation industry will adopt emerging future technologies to ensure that our industry can become more sustainable. Virgin Atlantic recently completed the world's first 100% Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) transatlantic flight by a commercial airline. Its going to be a challenge, but I am excited to see how the sector continues to innovate in the future.

in my life and career. Their guidance, mentorship and advocacy have provided me with invaluable opportunities and are the reason that I am where I am today. My mentors have also instilled confidence in moments where I have doubted myself.

What first inspired you into a career in HTL?

When I was younger, I was not sure what I wanted to do. It wasn't until I met a pilot at a school careers fair that aviation got on my radar. The passion and enthusiasm they had for the industry made me want to be part of the community. A year later, whilst completing my Private Pilot Licence Scholarship, I realised that my passion

was actually engineering as I spent most of my flights questioning how flight was even possible!

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in HTL?

To anyone considering a career in HTL and engineering, I would say don't let the fear of being different or not having a typical route into travel and aviation hold you back. Engineering is creative problem solving – and unique experiences help problems to be solved differently. Therefore, I truly believe uniqueness is the key to innovation in the aviation sector.

Vanessa Holden

Company **PizzaExpress** / Job Title **Head of Digital & Customer Technology**



I graduated in History from Newcastle University, and whilst I was aware of the digital world rapidly growing around me, it wasn't necessarily a career choice I had considered. However, in my first job at a consultancy business for the education sector, I was

involved in a digital transformation project, introducing me into the world of technology and how to improve business processes. I then moved into fashion retail, joining Sweaty Betty, which gave me an excellent grounding in ecommerce and how technology can optimise in-store operations to deliver commercial results. Although I love the buzz of digital and technology, I also love to travel! So decided to take the opportunity to explore new parts of the world for a few months whilst still early in my career. On return to the UK, I did some consulting roles in retail and media before landing at PizzaExpress in 2018, a brand I always admired (and who doesn't like pizza!). Having progressed internally and leading a predominantly female tech team, I am now Head of Digital & Customer Technology. I've had five amazing years, working on innovative solutions across digital products and customer-facing restaurant experiences, such as the industry-leading PizzaExpress Club loyalty app.



What advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't limit yourself to what you think you can or can't do. Be open to opportunities. You may be surprised by what you will enjoy or be capable of. If I had told my younger self that I would end up in a career in technology she would have laughed. But how rewarding it has been.

like a fast, exciting, and innovative sector, and with never a dull moment. It's particularly rewarding to see customers using something that I've been involved in creating and being able to turn the dial on customer behaviour.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Increasing the visibility of women leaders feeds more women to foster the ambition, and most importantly the belief that they too can become a leader, especially in technology roles. I've found imposter syndrome and lack of confidence is too often a cause for women to put a ceiling on themselves. I was in the recent cohort for the WiHTL Global Women Leaders Programme where incredible leaders shared their story. Hearing they had similar experiences and fears of self-doubt inspired confidence in me that there is a path to overcome these blockers.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

Integrity, courage and authenticity. I've been lucky to have worked with some great leaders who have inspired followship in the people around them. The ones I have admired the most have kept a human and open approach, allowing room for them to be challenged.

What first inspired you into a career in HTL?

As a customer of many HTL and retail brands, I always wanted to work 'behind the scenes' on what looked

QUICKFIRE

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

"You need the right balance between data and gut feeling" – Toto Wolff.

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

I've always liked the idea of Architecture – a good balance between logic and creativity. I could also travel the world and leave my mark!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The impact of AI and the possibilities it could create. We're into a new era of data and technology innovation with AI. There are so many possible applications that could support internal efficiencies as well as deliver even greater personalised experiences to customers.

Vanessa Kargbo

Company Yum! / Job Title Head of Restaurant Technology, Pizza Hut



I started my career in consulting at Deloitte. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and was keen to try out as many industries as possible... so it was a shame that I spent all of my time within banking! But it was great training, and gave me a really core set of skills. After

Deloitte, I moved to Sainsbury's where I spent six-and-a-half years doing everything from compliance to learning to online operations. I absolutely loved being in Ops, it's the heart of the business and great to be so close to the end-customer. Leaving Sainsbury's was a difficult decision, but I knew I wanted to work for a global organisation and explore relocation opportunities. I joined Yum! as Head of Operations and have recently moved into a role as Head of Restaurant Technology.

QUICKFIRE

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

Extraordinary: How to lead a bigger, braver, more meaningful life by Elke Edwards.

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

I'd be seeing more of the world.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Probably one of my ancestors. I think it would be really interesting to understand more about their lives, and their vision for the future.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

When I first joined the HTL industry, it didn't feel as though there wasn't much proactivity around EDI. In the last couple of years, I've seen real intentionality around EDI conversations and a real desire to recognise the reality, and be honest with ourselves about how diverse we are as an industry. And most importantly, to make really intentional decisions to change things.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I'd like to be a role model that is known for showing up and succeeding as their authentic self. I'd like to be remembered as someone who helped to bring more women, particularly black women, into the industry, and extended the ladder rather than pulling it up behind them.

What does success mean to you?

Success for me is all about balance; I'm a mum (my daughter is two-and-a-half) and I am also a leader who wants to continue to progress in her career. I'd love to get to a place where I feel I'm truly living in my element, where my strengths and passions meet.

What do you predict for the future of HTL?

From a workforce perspective, I hope we're going to be in a place where it's the norm to see a truly diverse set of leaders and for that to echo throughout the organisation. From a trends perspective, I think sustainability will rightly continue to be top-of-mind and a differentiator.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I've had lots of role models who have all impacted me in different ways. One of my role models is Grace Roper, who was my line manager at Sainsbury's just before I left. She has been the biggest champion in my career to date, which I don't think I realised at the time! She gave me opportunities that I wasn't necessarily the obvious choice for, fought for me to have a seat at the table, and encouraged me to use my voice as a black woman in the industry.

Other role models include Shannon Garcia, Global Chief Operating and Digital and Technology officer at Pizza Hut, and Clo Moriarty, Chief Retail and Technology officer at Sainsbury's. They both demonstrate how to be a Senior Leader who is human and connect with people in a meaningful way.



Carys Lees

Company Harrods / Job Title Head of Data Science



After a ten-year stint in consulting, I am actually a newcomer to the world of luxury retail which is so embodied by Harrods.

My career has taken me on a meandering journey through many industries; healthcare, government, retail finances, FMCG, and entertainment.

Through each of these, my focus has been on large scale process improvement, opportunity exploitation, and automation – all achieved through applications of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence.

Particular highlights include: designing and implementing a system at a retail bank which prevented vulnerable adults from being exploited by PayDay loan companies, working with the UK government to ensure that the UK hit it's green energy targets through investment in efficient energy sources, and creating a one of a kind system to share information securely amongst various organisations and charities to help prevent the proliferation of human trafficking in the UK.

QUICKFIRE

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

Good Omens Season 2. Special mention to Crowley's "I was wrong" dance.

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

Possibly still studying – I'm a bit of a maths nerd, and I think some of the maths underpinning the newest AI creations is fascinating.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Groundbreaking technological advancements becoming more accessible to a broader audience like the way that ChatGPT and Midjourney were in consumers hands immediately upon creation.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Emerald Fennell, Sanna Marin, Dolly Parton, Bo Burnham, Janja Garnbret, Rob Delaney, Buffy the Vampire Slayer...

I don't have to host, right?

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

For me this one is very easy. I value leaders who have an appreciation of the human beings in their teams, knowing their interests, their ambitions, and their strengths.

Oh, and the ability to give and take feedback well.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Having an impact and really enabling people to do something differently. For me personally, this means avoiding the vanity projects and instead really examining and improving the fundamentals of our retail business.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I think I've been very lucky in this regard. Throughout my career I've only ever been managed by intelligent and conscientious women, they've had the confidence

“ Success means having an impact and really enabling people to do something differently.

and trust to allow me to trial new and innovative approaches in their businesses – teaching me to extend my own trust to the talented and intelligent people who work for me.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

Sometimes, things don't go to plan. On those days, fight the instinct to make the situation seem better than it is to those around you. Accept the situation and then start trying again.

Or, to quote Jean-Luc Picard, "It is possible to commit no mistakes and still lose. That is not a weakness; that is life."



Natalia Martinez Del Rio

Company **Iberia Maintenance** / Job Title **Airframe Services Director**



Industrial Engineering is what I decided to study and what I would choose again if I were to go back, as my background is what has allowed me to become the Director of Aircraft Services (Heavy Maintenance) at Iberia Maintenance, a position I took up in April 2023.

My career has always been linked to aeronautical maintenance. I started in this industry at Engines, working for six years in Mexico. After this experience, I joined Iberia Maintenance's Engine Workshop, later moving on to the commercial area and then becoming the Director of Safety, Quality and Training until I joined the aircraft area.



QUICKFIRE

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

The Netflix show *Society of the Snow*. It makes you reflect on the capacity we have as human beings and that with generosity, support and teamwork we can achieve our goals.

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

Something completely different. Emergency room surgeon.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

How we are going to integrate tech development and AI in the aviation and MRO industry. There is a huge opportunity.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in HTL?

Because we are still a minority, and we can add another point of view and different values. The more different ways of looking at things, the richer the teamwork.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

It means bringing my vision and my story to society and future generations of women, and to inspire them to follow their dreams.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Trust yourself, your instincts, and your ability. I don't like to generalise, but I think this is a female thing. You have to try to get rid of the impostor syndrome. If you have achieved something it's because you made it, not because it was easy and you got help.

“ The more different ways of looking at things, the richer the teamwork.”

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

This is an easy question for me. I have it clear: humility, closeness and being a team player.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Role models have made me chase my dreams. They have pushed me to trust myself and motivated me to go further and the funny thing is that all of them were men. What I mean by that is that there is no 'men versus women' or anything like that. All of us are human beings and we need to support one another.

Andrea Mills

Company **Pets at Home** / Job Title **Director of Change**



I started my early career in Human Resources which gave me a great foundation to build on. The last 15 years have led me through a journey of change, transformation and technology, working in various organisations across both the private and public sectors but

primarily in warehousing and logistics, retail and utilities. Bringing together people, change and technology has become more of a focus over recent years: they cannot and should not be viewed in isolation. I feel privileged to have had opportunities and exposure to enable me to learn in all these three areas and understand how they fit together. I also have the battle scars and the knowledge from working on some big consumer and culture transformations, along with having the luxury of building teams, capabilities plus growing and developing talent. Even though it's been some years since, warehousing and logistics still holds a special place in my heart! Retail, however, has truly shown me the power of the consumer and how technology and people coming together makes a real difference to business performance. The one common thread that has remained constant throughout my career is a focus on people and leadership, which is fundamentally what makes the difference for me.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

Every woman needs to see someone they can relate to succeeding and it's not always apparent. Making it visible makes it real and achievable to others.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

Massive. Wherever you can, leverage your role model into a mentor who can take time to guide, support and challenge your thinking, actions, outputs, and behaviours – it's goldust. My mentors have certainly been instrumental for me as I have progressed and diversified my career.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in retail? How can we overcome them?

Today, there is far greater emphasis on organisations having DE&I strategies, policies and targets which is great, and investors, employees and consumers expect this too. We should use this to truly engage colleagues and consumers as one represents the other and vice versa.

But we must translate the words and commitments into something real and embedded into the core of what we all do every day, as opposed to it being a bolt-on topic. We must hold ourselves and all leaders to account, irrespective of function or department. Environments, policies and ways of working need DE&I weaved through them end to end, so it is just a case of 'how we do things around here'.

What does 'success' mean to you?

Success is about achieving something meaningful. That comes in two parts for me, my work, and my family. When I talk to women on the Springboard programme (a development programme for women which our colleagues have access to) I talk about my wall of work and wall of life. Working for an organisation that's making a difference in the world and the work I do supporting that. Seeing my kids succeed through their own life path, in their own way, using the foundations of their upbringing.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My mum. She taught me empathy and understanding, which is fundamental when it comes to leadership and working with people.

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

The Diary of a CEO as it has a great breadth of guests and topics. The one with Matthew Walker on coffee really made me think!

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I'd run my own gymnastics and family fitness business. An opportunity for young children to have fun and get fit through gymnastics.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

Maria Branyas who is currently the oldest women in the world at 116. She's lived in different countries, worked as a nurse, had a family, lived through several pandemics, wars... can you imagine what she has seen and experienced throughout her life!



Donna Moore

Company **IKEA** / Job Title **Country Digital Manager, UK & IE**

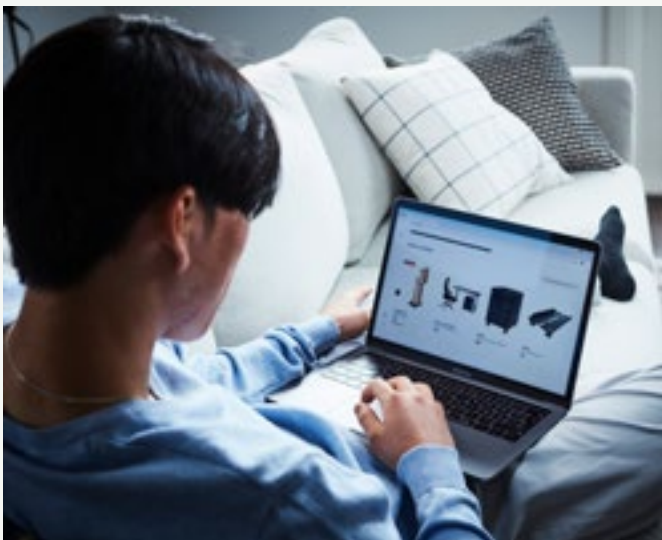


I started in retail 35 years ago working part-time at Greggs whilst in sixth form. I knew university wasn't an option for me and was unclear of what direction to take in my career. I continued at Greggs and had some wonderful role models who believed in me and gave

me the opportunity to be a pioneer for a Graduate Trainee Program even though I didn't have the qualifications. This gave me the much-needed confidence and motivation and provided me with the business foundation and knowledge to be successful in retail.

I joined IKEA 25 years ago and fell in love with the company's culture and values. And the people – I have been fortunate to work across many different categories and channels over the years, my big passion is supporting people within the business to grow and develop and paying forward the investment that was made in me many years ago.

I am always pushing myself to take on new challenges and opportunities and that is why I have the amazing role of Digital Manager. I am passionate about finding ways to bring more women into technology and develop future leaders within the field of digital and technology to create more balanced and inclusive teams in the industry.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Ginni Rometty – currently reading her book *Good Power*.

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

"Know your own worth, then add VAT."

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Artificial Intelligence and how it has the capacity to drive future innovation, automation and revolutionise the way we live and work.

Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

In the digital and technology sector, women only account for around 26% of the workforce. Whilst this is an improvement from 19% in 2019, much more work needs to be done to get to a place of gender balance. It's so important that we attract and retain female leaders to have a more balanced and equitable representation in retail and create a positive and empowering environment for future generations.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

I most value integrity and openness in a leader, someone who is a good listener and shows empathy.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

There is now a real focus on inclusion and diversity with sustainable and proactive measures being implemented, and policies to ensure a more inclusive workplace culture.

I'm fortunate to work for a company that fully embraces diversity and inclusion, we have a strong equality plan and diverse focus groups and have introduced win-win mentorship. I am proud to be the sponsor of the LGBTQ+ reference group and I feel we are making big strides forward.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career

It's ok to make mistakes, as long as you correct them and learn from them. Our company founder had a saying "only while sleeping one makes no mistakes."

Rosangela Robbiani

Company **Sisal** / Job Title **Product Managing Director**



I graduated in Economics at the University of Milan and wrote my thesis at the University of Cambridge. After an international career in Accenture, I joined Sisal where I developed my competencies in strategy, online and marketing. In 2023, I became Product

Managing Director, entrusted with developing a world-leading product portfolio, integrating lottery, betting and online games for all Sisal companies in Italy, Turkey and Morocco, both for retail and digital channels, while focussing on innovation, digitalisation and sustainability. With 20 years of experience in the industry, I am a member of the leadership team, reporting to Sisal's CEO. Moreover, I currently serve as a member of the executive committee of the European Lotteries Association, the European umbrella organisation of national lotteries.

What does being a Woman to Watch in HTL mean to you?

It's an honour and an important achievement for me but also for Sisal, the company I work for, that truly creates opportunities for women to develop their potential and creates conditions to promote merit, regardless of gender. And for me it's a responsibility to encourage other women to dare to dream big, no fear or excuse, and then work hard to become the best version of themselves, at work and in life.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

I have been lucky enough to see the evolution of my industry over many years and one of the things that makes me most proud to see is the increased awareness of the importance I&D to the point that today it is one

of the strategic priorities, always discussed and promoted by leaders and at all levels, as something that can bring real value to the company, to customers, to colleagues and to all stakeholders.

“ It's a responsibility to encourage other women to dare to dream big.”

What advice would you give to your younger self?

The same advice that I learned from many people I esteem the most: always do your best and do the right thing, it's the only thing that matters and it's how you can make the difference in others' lives, professionally and personally. Even if it may be harder, in the long run it will pay and will make you a better person.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

The leaders that I admire the most have three key characteristics: first a clear vision of the future to see and show direction; second, linearity of

thought and the ability to communicate to everyone in a simple way and make themselves understood; and third but equally important, the empathy to inspire, motivate and empower people to reach ambitious goals.



QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Samantha Cristoforetti, the first Italian woman in space, the first to take command of the International Space Station, who holds the record for the longest uninterrupted spaceflight by a European astronaut. She inspires all women to follow their dreams, to study and work hard to make them true, while remaining themselves. When I met her, I was impressed by her ability to fill the room with her energy and to make a complex topic like space simple and fascinating.

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

Just some days ago I saw a private expedition that brought four astronauts of different nationalities to the International Space Station, where they were

warmly welcomed by seven astronauts also from all around the world. It gave me great confidence in the possibilities of science to further push our human limits and in our ability to work together, harness our diversity and overcome our differences to achieve incredible goals.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

What I love about my sector is our ability to make people dream, bringing into their lives small moments of fun and lightheartedness. Consumer behavior continually evolves, socialisation and technology are key trends, the challenge but also the great opportunity for the future is to lead innovation to continue to entertain people with the best and most responsible products.

Chiho Sakumi

Company QVC Japan / Job Title IT Director, Japan Technology Lead



I currently lead the Tech team of 82 team members, providing technical services and systems to our business in the Japanese market since June 2022. I began my career in the internal IT department at a global company through a grad assignment. My major

in college was English Sociolinguistics and I'm not an engineer, but I found the IT department suited me well. I love global environments, and finding solutions. My passion lies in the retail and consumer goods sector, where I've dedicated over half of my career. My journey has provided me with a comprehensive understanding of IT solutions, tailored to the unique challenges of the retail landscape. I thrive on leading teams to innovate and optimize IT strategies, ensuring seamless operations and technological excellence for our global retail endeavors.

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

It is a great honor to be recognised as a Woman to Watch in my current sector. Many Japanese women have little confidence in themselves, despite having world-class capabilities. I now have confidence that I can be a role model to whomever might benefit. I love working in retail, and I'm always happy to share the why, what and how of what I do with other. This Index will empower me to do this, and to share my story more widely.

How have you seen or felt the conversation around EDI evolve during your time in the sector?

In Japan's retail sector, EDI has become a prominent topic, especially regarding women since the 1990s.

The discussion surrounding women's involvement in the workforce gained momentum due to social shifts, with an ageing population leading to concerns about a shortage of labour. This backdrop prompted conversations about leveraging and empowering women in retail. In companies with physical stores, it's common for women to work part-time, primarily in roles such as cashiers or support positions. This trend is partly influenced by social expectations and traditional gender roles, where women are often relegated to specific job functions.

Issues such as the gender pay gap highlight systemic challenges that hinder women's financial progression. The Japanese government are taking

steps to reduce limitations around women's work and incomes. This is a beginning, and I truly believe it's a good step forward. With this background, I'm so proud of QVC's initiatives and taking real actions.

What impact have role models had on your own life and career?

I've been shaped by remarkable individuals who served as my guiding lights. At the forefront is my aunt, a resilient and inspiring woman who, at the age of 99, continues to be a beacon of wisdom.

On the professional front, mentors, all male supervisors, played critical roles in shaping my journey. While their support was unwavering, it was not without challenges.

Their unconscious biases occasionally manifested, leading to moments of negative advice. However, having multiple mentors allowed me to navigate these moments and learn from diverse perspectives. Equally crucial to my success has been the steadfast support of my husband, who has consistently been my ally, providing unwavering encouragement and a push forward when needed.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

The most significant lessons revolve around the importance of having cooperative partners and a supportive team. Equally crucial is the recognition that we must openly seek help when needed.

QUICKFIRE

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I would be a university or professional educator. Combining sociolinguistic expertise with practical experience in global organisations, I currently advocate for how communication in culturally and linguistically diverse environments affects DE&I in the workplace. Beyond gender, I advocate for workplaces where individuals can excel in diverse strengths,

believing that high communication skills are key for creating a societal workplace.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

I'm seeing retail getting closer with technology. The pandemic led to more online shopping, for example. Historically, technology has felt like a man's area, but I trust that the future of technology will be driven by both men and women.

Leigh Stuart

Company Harrods / Job Title Head of Business Solutions



I could say that my retail career started at 15, as a teenage girl sitting through never-ending shifts on a Sainsbury's checkout, praying that at some point I'd be able to see the end of my queue! But it was probably when a surprised and slightly scared History graduate joined Andersen

Consulting (now Accenture), that I began my love of all things retail. As a Consultant, I worked with some fabulous brands. Highlights include a three-year stint at Coles in Australia, supporting the launch of the Banana Republic brand in the UK, and navigating the weekly back-and-forth to Scandinavia in the depths of winter whilst six months pregnant! For the last 16 years I've been 'in-house' with interesting roles (back) at Sainsbury's, Kingfisher and now Harrods. I've proudly worked for Harrods for over five years now and am still inspired and challenged every day by the uniqueness of this business from top to bottom and the excitement that the luxury sector brings.



Why do you feel it's important to highlight women leaders in retail?

I've been really fortunate throughout my retail career to witness confident and charismatic female leaders that have inspired and given me belief that it is possible to juggle all the plates.

But there's no getting away from the fact that this is a historically hierarchical and traditional industry. When I have seen female leaders really thrive it is when they have led without allowing themselves to fall into stereotypical leadership style which just emulates men. These leaders have led with authenticity, curiosity, pragmatism and above all, as human beings. We are very lucky at Harrods in that our Executive Leadership is extremely balanced.

What do you think are the main roadblocks to inclusion in retail? How can we overcome them?

I recently took part in a panel assessing potential delivery partners for a large transformation programme. I was disappointed that of the four companies who pitched to us, almost all of their teams were predominantly male, and women were more often than not in the 'softer' roles.

I think it is wonderful that our industry can take advantage of the caring, empathetic, and compassionate side of women, but the bold, determined and no-nonsense side of our nature can equally be harnessed for greatness.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learnt in your career?

I was happy to operate at a fast pace for the first ten years of my career. But when I slowed down to have children, my biggest fear was being left behind. But doing things at the right time and pace has served me well. I began to switch mindsets and believe that slower and steadier can win the race too. I learned not to be afraid to take sideways, or even backwards, steps if they will ultimately lead you to a better place.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

For me, I think that great leadership includes that beautiful balance between doing what is right for the business – be it commercially or strategically, whilst responding to the needs of individuals on their team at the human level.

QUICKFIRE

If you weren't working in retail, what would you be doing?

I definitely would love to be doing something creative, I love baking and experimenting with recipes. I'd love to own my own bakery – although I'm not sure the 4am starts would suit me!

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

Coming from the IT side of the business, I'd have to say I am looking out for how technology like generative AI will transform the way we work – or will it? I suspect

we will find the niche areas where such tech can make a difference, but in an industry where personalised service, experiences and 1:1 interactions are so important, I don't think it'll be putting us humans out of a job any time soon!

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

My heart says Johnny Depp, but the history nerd in me would want to have a long chat with someone who'd witnessed key moments in the past, like a passenger on the Titanic or a survivor of Auschwitz.

“ I'm looking out for how technology like generative AI will transform the way we work – or will it? ”



Nichole Tinnion

Company **Asda** / Job Title **Senior Director - Technology**



I first joined Asda in 2012 as an analyst within the technology team and have since worked my way up to Senior Director. I have a breadth of experience and knowledge across programme delivery and service operations, embracing every opportunity presented to

me, including a year-long secondment to Walmart in the US. I currently lead the Office of the Chief Information Officer as well as teams that deliver technology elements of Asda's strategic programmes such as the acceleration of our new convenience business. I'm very proud of the team's delivery of Asda Rewards; the first time Asda has had a loyalty scheme.

I didn't have a traditional route into technology; I left school at 16 and did an IT apprenticeship at a local college, and to this day I continue to be an ambassador for the college, spending time talking to students, teachers, and parents to encourage young women to strive to be an equal and break down barriers.

I am passionate about wellbeing and mentoring, creating environments and a culture where conversations around personal experience and storytelling is the norm. I love developing others, ensuring people can reach their full potential and bring their true self to work.



What is the best professional advice you've ever received?

My mum told me when I was young to 'get into a big organisation and then say yes to every opportunity'. Something my grandma had also said to her! They were certainly right; through hard work I've had many opportunities to grow and learn. I'm lucky to have been surrounded by incredible role models and coaches, as well as the teams I've led who I learn from every day.

Positively impacting our customers and colleagues' lives, especially during the cost-of-living crisis, is true job satisfaction.

What does being a Woman to Watch in retail mean to you?

It is a true honour to be listed – I hope that my route into technology and my career so far can inspire others. I feel a real responsibility to be the best leader I can be, as well as a role model to others, so that they can have a voice, believe in themselves, and have some fun along the way.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

You don't need to know exactly what you want to do in your career – there are so many varied and exciting roles out there so you just have to give things a try, understand what you love, where you excel, and your career path will take you in so many different directions. You're in the driver's seat so be confident and do what makes you truly happy!

“ I hope that my route into technology and my career so far can inspire others.

What would you say to someone who is considering a career in retail?

Do it! It's so rewarding working in retail – we saw during the pandemic how important our sector is.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

Judith McKenna, former President and CEO of Walmart International – her career is incredible.

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

Becoming the 0.1% - so many good stories in that book that are relatable

from a leadership perspective.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The number of talented colleagues who are coming through the pipeline is very exciting. They're people who will implement some seriously cool tech that will change the way we all work.

Erin Weigel

Company Deliveroo / Job Title Senior Design Manager



My name is Erin, and I like to do things – many different things. I started my career in customer service and retail sales jobs and eventually pivoted into tech. I spent years as a Principal Designer at Booking.com where I learned how to run

effective product experiments. I now work as a Senior Design Manager at Deliveroo where I focus on design systems, accessibility, and physical product design. My recent side projects are writing a book about Product Experimentation (to be published by Rosenfeld Media early in 2024), renovating a spooky abandoned villa in France that I bought with a friend, and traveling around the world to speak at conferences about digital product design and development. You can check out all the things that I do at www.erindoesthings.com.

“As I got older, I realised that though I can do my best to be a positive force in the workplace, I’m so much more than my job title.

What impact would you like to make in your sector? What would you like to be remembered for?

I’d like to inspire more companies to become truly customer-centric and give them the tools to become so. Working in tech, it’s easy to forget that the daily choices we make have a real and significant effect on the people and partners we serve. Through storytelling and my upcoming book, I’d like to remind our industry that behind all the pixels and data points are people just trying to live their best lives. I’d like to be remembered for constantly striving to achieve my life’s motto to “Be Kind and Make Things Better.” It’s the driving force behind everything I do.

What characteristics do you value most in a leader?

The most powerful and effective leaders I’ve had the pleasure of working for were kind, smart yet humble, and excellent communicators. Kindness helped them connect

with people at the human level. Their intellect helped people trust the goals and direction they set for the business but feel comfortable to challenge them when necessary. And their inclusive communication helped everyone truly understand what we needed to achieve together and inspired us to make it happen.

What is the best professional advice you’ve ever received?

It’s not professional advice per se, but it’s life advice I bring into my work: “Ask for forgiveness—not for permission.” Living with this mindset, I’ve learned and done things I’d likely not be given the opportunity to do. It gives me a sense of personal autonomy and power.

What is the most valuable lesson you’ve learnt in your career?

I am not my job. When I was younger, my identity and self-worth was tied to the work that I did. As I got older, I realised that though I can do my best to be a positive force in the workplace, I’m so much more than my job title. Businesses are far too unstable and shareholder profit-driven to dedicate my life to. Yes, I find purpose and joy in my work, but I now have healthy boundaries. I do the emotional work necessary to become a mature human being who makes the most of her life and not just a cog in the capitalist machine.

QUICKFIRE

Who is your role model?

My friends. I try to surround myself with people who are smart and passionate. They range from small business owners, leaders in their craft at top tech companies, to artists, and loving parents.

If you weren’t working in HTL, what would you be doing?

I would likely be a neuroscience research psychologist. I’m very interested in the nature of humanity and how we evolve into the people that we become. I think it would fulfill my philosophical curiosity about the human experience but in a way that’s grounded in testing hypotheses.

What one thing are you most excited about for the future of your sector?

The opportunity we have to impact climate change and sustainability. Because hospitality, travel, and retail are far-reaching, even small changes we make to how we operate can make a big difference on our natural environment.

Who would be your dream dinner party guest?

The Obamas. The impact they’ve had on the world is inspiring, yet they also seem very fun and down-to-earth. I’ve read their books and have followed their leadership journeys both during their tenure in the White House and beyond.

About Us

Acknowledgements

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About the WiHTL & DiR Collaboration Community

WiHTL & Diversity in Retail is the only Collaboration Community devoted to increasing equity, diversity and inclusion in the Hospitality, Travel, Leisure and Retail sectors. Our mission is to positively impact 5 million employees in these sectors by 2030. In working together, we can amplify the impact of member organisations' individual initiatives to create workplace environments which benefit everyone.

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www.wihl.com or

www.diversityinretail.com



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The MBS Group is a leading sector-specialist B Corp executive search firm advising all consumer-facing industries. Clients consider us to be the partner of choice when searching for critical leadership roles that make a difference. We work at Board level and on executive positions across all functions of strategic importance.

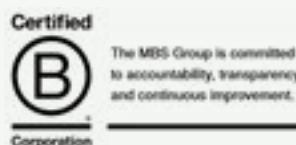
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