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# Julie Arrowsmith

President  
G6 Hospitality



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Julie Arrowsmith is President and Interim CEO of G6 Hospitality, the parent company of the iconic Motel 6 and Studio 6 brands. In this position, Arrowsmith is responsible for driving strategic growth across the enterprise. Arrowsmith played a vital role in the organization's transition to a full franchise model and the sale of its remaining owned real estate portfolio in 2022.

Arrowsmith has nearly 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry and has held various leadership roles with increasing responsibility since joining Motel 6 and Studio 6 in 1995. In her previous role as CFO, she has led several notable business successes, including navigating the financial success of the business during an unprecedented global pandemic, as well as the latest restructuring of the business.

Arrowsmith believes in the importance of mentorship and advocating for women in business and the hospitality industry. In 2019, she was celebrated as one of North Texas' most influential women by the Dallas Business Journal. She frequently participates in leadership panels for the American Hotel & Lodging Association's (AHLA) ForWard initiative and is involved in mentorship programs through AHLA, Texas A&M Mays School of Business and Castell College, a program helping students seeking a degree in hospitality.

Prior to joining G6, Arrowsmith worked in the audit team at Deloitte. She is a graduate of Texas A&M University where she received a bachelor's degree in accounting and subsequently earned her CPA license.

# Madison Austrich

Business Analytics  
Manager  
Aimbridge Hospitality



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Madison Austrich is a Business Analytics Manager at Aimbridge Hospitality, a leading, global hospitality company. She began her career working in hotel operations, starting at the front desk of a Hampton Inn. After graduating from the Cornell Peter and Stephanie Nolan School of Hotel Administration, Madison joined the Four Seasons Resort Maui as a Finance Manager-in-Training. In 2020, Madison pivoted to join Aimbridge Hospitality as a Staff Accountant. She was soon promoted to the role of Central Accounting Manager, where she managed a team of accountants and developed budgets and forecasts for an eighty-property ownership portfolio. As the next step in her growth, Madison joined the strategy and business analytics team as a Senior Analyst. Madison was recently promoted to her current role as a Business Analytics Manager in which she focuses on building insightful analytical tools, driving operational analyses, and managing a series of case studies on how Aimbridge delivers best-in-class performance.

Madison is an active advocate for gender equality in the hospitality industry. Within Aimbridge, she is a founding committee member and Vice Chair of Development for the company's associate resource group, A.W.E. (Aimbridge Women Excelling.) She is also a Castell@College panel speaker and a ForWard Ambassador.

In addition, Madison is an Industry Impact Leader as part of AHLA's No Room for Trafficking initiative, the President of the Cornell Hotel Society, Northern Texas Chapter, a spin instructor, and a competitive athlete at Dallas Rowing Club. Upon her graduation at Cornell, she received the prestigious Hotelie for Life Prize and was the student speaker at the Hotel School graduation ceremony. This year, she was recognized as part of *Hotel Management* magazine's Thirty Under 30 class.

# Nigel Barker

CEO  
StudioNB Inc.



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Nigel Barker is an internationally renowned photographer, creative director and entrepreneur who opened his New York studio in 1996. He served 17 seasons as photographer and judge on the hit TV show, ***America's Next Top Model***, which aired in over 140 countries, and hosted Oxygen Network's modeling competition series, ***The Face***, starring alongside Naomi Campbell. Barker also created the VH1 Reality show *The Shot*, his podcast ***The Shaken & Stirred Show*** is currently in production for it's TV release. His latest hit show ***Top Photographer*** premiered to rave reviews and a second season is in the works.

Barker's presence in the fashion and entertainment industry has resulted in an array of exciting projects including the creation of his own furniture line the ***NB1 & NB2 Collections***, *A skate board collection with ShutNYC*, *3 signature fragrances with Demeter*, *a unique custom NB Photobooth*, and as *Ambassador for AC Hotels by Marriott* he created the first ever specialty *Gin & Tonic glass* and many more innovative projects.

As Creative Director, Barker currently works with 21c Hotel Chicago and the Sustainable Fashion Brands EcoFashionCorp and YesAnd. He is also a Founder and partner in the NYC/LA gym, **THE DOGPOUND**.

Barker has directed and produced films, documentaries and commercials for Hollywood clients to international charitable organizations and was awarded the "Film Heals" Award for Humanitarianism at the 6th Annual Manhattan Film Festival for ***Dreams Are Not Forgotten***. Using the power of photography and motion pictures he has been able to spread his humanitarian message to vast audiences through films, PSA's and traveling exhibitions. He has worked with several charitable organizations including the Special Olympics where he serves as a Champion Ambassador, The Humane Society of the United States, The Humane Society International, Make A Wish Foundation, The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric Aids Foundation (as a 2 term board member), Jumpstart (where he serves as a board member)The Edeyo Foundation (board member) and the USO where he serves as a digital advisory committee member.

Drawing upon his 20+ years of experience in the fashion and beauty industries, he has two books—***The Beauty Equation***, published by Abrams, and his latest book, *New York Times* Best Seller ***Models of Influence*** published by Harper Collins. Nigel currently lives in Woodstock NY with his wife and renown Yogi, Cristen AKA @ChinTwins and their two children Jack and Jasmine.

# Anna Blue

President  
AHLA Foundation



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Anna Blue is a passion catalyst, change agent, and seasoned executor, with more than two decades of experience leading social impact movements.

From the U.S. Senate and presidential campaign trail, to advancing deep-rooted systemic change in urban education, gender equality, and digital safety, Anna's career reflects her belief in the power of building community, collaboration and consensus. In her leadership roles with the Tech Coalition, Girl Up, and The Female Quotient, Anna built transformational partnerships with global brands and Fortune 500 companies – including Disney, Apple, Snap, Meta, Kellogg, Deloitte, and WWE – curated powerful content across all media, generated significant fundraising and revenue growth, and built and mobilized communities to drive action.

Anna is recognized for her insights and has engaged audiences on the power of girls and women, youth leadership, Gen Z, the future of work, social justice, and DEI&B on some of the largest stages, including Cannes Lions, Fortune's Most Powerful Women Next Gen, SXSW, The World Economic Forum, and even ringside at WWE's WrestleMania. Building deep-rooted relationships with internal and external stakeholders is Anna's superpower, and it's reflected in her authentic relationships with the media, corporate leaders, policy-makers, celebrities and influencers, all of whom trust her authenticity and ability to impact and uplift communities.

# Rebecca Bender

CEO & Founder,  
Rebecca Bender Initiative  
& Elevate Academy



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Born with tenacity and an entrepreneurial spirit, Rebecca believes that we are all more than the bad things that have happened in our lives. After escaping her trafficker in 2007, Rebecca was determined to make a new life for herself and her young daughter. She worked hard, eventually opening her own business and earning a Master's degree. While she was attending college online, Rebecca dreamed of launching a school for survivors of human trafficking - a place where anyone with lived experience could enroll and learn the skills and knowledge necessary to build a new life. In 2014 Elevate Academy was born and within eight years had served nearly 1,000 students in 12 countries and nearly 508 U.S. cities across the nation. This innovative online school is thriving today and remains a place where survivors continue to connect, grow, and find tools to ignite their futures.

Rebecca is a CEO and a published author who has earned a distinct reputation as a trailblazer and thought leader in the field. Her specialized training has equipped well over 100,000 professionals including FBI, Homeland Security, local law enforcement, community leaders, medical professionals, and more. Rebecca was appointed to the United States National Advisory Council and serves as an advisor to Aequitas, A21, and the HSI North Texas Task Force. She assists as a subject matter expert for investigations and operations across the country, and is regularly called upon to testify as an expert witness. Rebecca is a highly sought-after speaker, consultant, and nationally recognized authority who is passionate about seeing people transform their lives so they can change the world. When she's not traveling and leading her team, you'll find her on the sidelines or in the audience cheering for her four daughters, listening to true-crime podcasts, or working on her next manuscript by the pool.

# Dominique Broadway

CEO

Finances Demystified, LLC



Dominique Broadway is an award-winning Personal Finance Coach, Speaker, Finance Expert and the Founder of Finances De•mys•ti•fied & The Social Money Tour. More than that, though, she is a proponent of the ordinary person, believing that anyone should have access to the same financial knowledge and advice as the uber wealthy.

Dominique has received various accolades: The Top 30 Under 30 in Washington DC, the DC Future Business Leader of America Businessperson of the Year and the Top Financial Advisor for Millennials in the US.

Dominique's demystified financial advice has been highlighted on Yahoo!, Huffington Post, Forbes, USA Today, Black Enterprise, Marketwatch.com, Ebony Magazine, Levo League, Refinery29 and other media outlets. She has a strong passion for working with young professionals, entrepreneurs and people of all ages to bring their Dreams2Reality.

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# Yvonne Chen

Director, Private Sector  
Engagement  
ECPAT-USA



As the Director of Private Sector Engagement, Yvonne Chen ensures businesses and relevant stakeholders understand how human traffickers and child exploiters use business structures to exploit victims and identify, develop, and/or deploy tools and best practices to stop it.

Ms. Chen brings a unique perspective having been a live-in coordinator for a residential program for those who have experienced sex trafficking. She is a fluent Mandarin speaker and national expert on working with East Asian communities trafficked in massage businesses. She also has expertise in survivor engagement, victim identification, and outreach and training. Ms. Chen has over a decade of experience providing direct services to trafficked persons. She also has trained and educated tens of thousands of community members and professionals to understand human trafficking and identify trafficked people. Prior to coming to ECPAT-USA, Ms. Chen worked as a Supervising Program Manager at another anti-trafficking agency and has experience working with different refugee populations in the United States and South Africa.

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# Rod Clough

President, Americas  
HVS



As President of HVS Americas, Rod leads a dynamic group of nearly 200 team members across consulting divisions that focus on valuation services, asset management, hotel management, brokerage, and capital markets. Rod's tenure with HVS spans nearly 30 years, during which time he has played an important role in growing the company from just a few locations across the Americas to 40. In a typical year, Rod's group consults on over 2,500 existing or proposed hotels and resorts, and in 2021, he oversaw the 568-hotel Extended Stay America appraisal portfolio. In 2003, Rod founded the firm's sister appraisal division, U.S. Hotel Appraisals, which completes roughly 1,000 hotel appraisals annually. Rod is a founding owner/partner of HVS Mexico-Latin America, and he relaunched the firm's U.S. Brokerage and Capital Markets division in 2018. Rod is a Designated Member of the Appraisal Institute (MAI) and a licensed real estate broker. He has cultivated a diverse leadership team at HVS and a firm culture that is welcoming to all. Once associates join HVS, they tend to stay due to the extraordinary culture Rod has inspired, defined by the ideals of balance, connectivity, efficiency, collaboration, integrity, kindness, and excellence, among others. Rod resides in Northern Colorado where he and his husband Jeff are raising their daughter, Rory.

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# LaVerne Council

CEO  
Emerald One, LLC



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LaVerne H. Council is a transformational leader with over 35 years of career experience as a global executive and intrapreneur with companies like Dell, Johnson & Johnson, Grant Thornton, and Ernst & Young, LLC. Today, she is an entrepreneur and the CEO of Emerald One, LLC, a 100% woman-owned small business focused on closing the gap between technology strategy and execution, leading organizations through digital transformation, and turning technology leaders' goals into accomplishments. LaVerne was Dell's first global vice president for technology, the first global CIO of Johnson & Johnson, the first black and first woman CIO for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the first black female CIO of a Cabinet-level organization.

LaVerne is a lifelong volunteer and was the first black female member of the March of Dimes board of directors. Today, she is a member of the FastCompany Impact Council and is on the Board of Directors for ConMed, Thompson Reuters, Concentrix, and GirlUp.

# Laisha Dismuke

VP, Human Resources  
AHLA / AHLA Foundation



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Laisha Dismuke is a cultivator and creator of positive organizational cultures to foster workplaces that enable all employees to contribute to the organization at their full potential. A proven strategic leader with over fifteen years of experience in human resources and operations, she has worked with organizations to develop and implement strategies to address challenging workplace culture issues. Laisha has a deep understanding of cultural dynamics and the impact they can have on a company's success. She has a proven track record of helping organizations to build more inclusive cultures, resulting in increased productivity, employee engagement, and retention. Prior to her work at AHLA, Laisha partnered with Fortune 500 companies, including Citi, IBM, and Vodafone, to successfully design and initiate results-oriented DEI-focused workshops, programs, training, dialogues, and discussions for senior leaders, people managers, and staff that encourage learning, reflection, awareness, and understanding as well as community-building, ultimately inspiring organizational growth and progress. Laisha's deep appreciation for human development and commitment to transformational change fuels her approach to facilitating teams and engaging with groups to reveal the collective intelligence in the room and bring about real growth and development while ensuring that all personality types participate fully and with enthusiasm in order to reveal unexpected ideas and generate solutions.

# Ann Fastiggi

Consultant  
Spencer Stuart



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Based in Stamford, Ann Fastiggi is a member of Spencer Stuart's Global Consumer Practice, specializing in hospitality and leisure. With more than 20 years of executive recruiting and leadership consulting experience, she focuses on the recruitment and assessment of CEOs, CFOs, CMOs and other C-suite executives in the hotel, restaurant, gaming, consumer travel, consumer and retail sectors. In addition to her work in the C-suite, Ann has led searches for some of the industry's most influential board of directors.

## **Extensive experience in hospitality and consumer services**

- » For more than 20 years Ann has helped clients complete more than 300 searches for executives in a variety of functional areas, including general management, marketing, sales, development, operations and finance. Ann has also played an integral role in a number of CEO searches within the hospitality sector. Committed to improving diversity, Ann also has a strong track record of placing female and other diverse candidates in the industry.
- » Prior to her current position at Spencer Stuart, Ann was a managing director with a global search firm, where she led the hospitality and leisure practice. She also spent several years as managing director with another global search firm.
- » Earlier in her career, Ann spent seven years playing a key role in establishing the firm's hospitality and leisure practice. She started her career with another global executive search firm before moving into human resources with Time, Inc.

Ann has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Boston University and a master's degree in counseling psychology from Temple University. She also serves on the Advisory Board of Boston University's School of Hospitality Administration.

# Jenn Fugolo

VP, Advancement  
AHLA Foundation



Jenn Fugolo is Vice President of Advancement for the American Hotel & Lodging Foundation. In this newly created role, she is responsible for the Foundation's DE&I efforts, which includes driving the successful implementation of its 5-year strategic DE&I plan for the industry as well as expanding the reach of career advancement opportunities for opportunity youth through the Foundation's Empowering Youth Program. Jenn joined the Foundation from Sunrise Senior Living, where, as Senior Director, she led the company's corporate communications function spanning crisis and reputation management, employee communications, executive visibility, and various aspects of external communications. In addition, she architected the company's DE&I roadmap and helped introduce new approaches to employee engagement through a DE&I lens. Jenn started her career at global public relations and marketing agency FleishmanHillard, where she served a range of non-profit, government, and corporate clients. Jenn received her undergraduate degree in Journalism from the University of Maryland, College Park, and DE&I certification from Cornell University.

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# Michael George

Founder, President & CEO  
Crescent Hotels & Resorts



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Michael is Founder, President & CEO of Crescent Hotels & Resorts, an award winning, nationally recognized operator specializing in full service upper upscale and luxury hotels, golf resorts, destination spas and distinguished restaurants. Crescent currently operates over 100 hotels and resorts and over 200 restaurants and bars in the U.S. and Canada. Crescent is one of the few elite management companies approved to operate full-service luxury brands under the Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt affiliations. Crescent also operates a collection of iconic and lifestyle independent hotels and resorts within the Latitudes, Lifestyles by Crescent Collection. Crescent's clients include premier hotel REITs, private equity firms and major developers.

Prior to founding Crescent, Michael served as Senior Vice President of Operations for Destination Hotels & Resorts who operated signature assets including Hotel del Coronado, Eden Roc Resort and Royal Palms Resort & Spa. Prior to Destination, Michael served as Chief Operating Officer for Sunstone Hotels & Resorts and Senior Vice President of Operations for Interstate Hotels & Resorts.

Earlier in his career, Michael served as an award-winning General Manager for premier hotels with Hilton, Westin, and Sheraton brand affiliations. Michael serves on full-service Owners Advisory Boards for Marriott and Hilton, the Board of Directors of the American Hotel Lodging Association, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, numerous educational and philanthropic organizations and previously several publicly traded hotel companies.

Michael and his wife of 40 years have 5 daughters and several grandchildren.

# Jale Mashimi

Divisional VP, Operations,  
Independent & Lifestyle Division  
Remington Hotels Corporation



Jale Hashimi has been a recognized leader in the hospitality industry for 25 years including 18 highly successful years with Remington Hotels. Jale's operational knowledge has grown through her 17 years as a hotel General Manager at multiple successful properties before elevating her career to a Divisional Vice President of Operations with Remington Hotels in 2017.

Jale's current role as a Divisional Vice President is ensuring luxury and independent hotel operational success. Jale's expertise is driven by her focus on hotel management, yield management, profitability and operational standards. Jale is focused on driving great culture where diversity is embraced and employees feel valued through exceeding customer expectation via innovation, enhancing strategy and disciplined execution. Jale has a true passion and aptitude for guest service satisfaction, operational efficiency and executive leadership. Jale is a financial management graduate of George Mason University.

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# Tara Higgins

## SVP, Commercial Encore



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Tara Higgins is a global business leader and 25-year event industry veteran. Having started her career on the corporate side at DaimlerChrysler, she moved to the agency side after four years, then onto business consulting and a co-founder of a start-up. Tara joined Encore in October 2019 as SVP Commercial. As SVP Commercial, she is leading the strategy and commercial vision as Encore continues to evolve into the most engaged and effective event company for its customers across all scales of meeting and events.

Tara has managed and led multiple successful event businesses that offered results-driven events, experiences and campaigns across all event mediums (in-person, virtual and hybrid) for many of the world's most recognizable brands. This included tech startups and companies in hypergrowth mode such as Alibaba, Salesforce, Rodan+Fields and Tesla to long-standing Fortune 500 global organizations such as Cisco, Oracle, Nissan, Chrysler and Gartner.

With much time spent within corporate organizations covering portfolio planning, contract negotiations, value-based selling, event pricing strategies and ROI modeling to drive the most effective results for their organization.

Before joining Encore, Tara co-founded Rival Nation, a first in mass-market sports fan platform start-ups. Prior to that, she spent 18 years in international general management and leadership at George P. Johnson, with her last four years as Executive Vice President, Global Operations.

Tara also has her Global Executive MBA in International Business from Georgetown.



# Amanda Hite

President  
STR



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Amanda W. Hite, STR's president since 2011, oversees the company's business activities and overall direction.

Under Hite's leadership, STR has experienced substantial growth in its global presence, client base, data coverage and revenue. Her time with the company has also resulted in several significant milestones, including the 2016 unification of STR's global brands, and the implementation of a number of key industry deliverables. Additionally, Hite led STR through the company's acquisition by CoStar Group (NASDAQ: CSGP) in late 2019.

Hite's accomplishments have been recognized with inclusion in "30 Influential Women in Hospitality" and "40 Under 40 Emerging Leaders" lists.

Hite is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Hotel & Lodging Association and the U.S. Travel Association. She also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Nashville Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and on the Industry Advisory Board of the Hotel and Restaurant Management Program at Auburn University.

Prior to joining STR in 2006, Hite was the Director of Research for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce.

She is a graduate of Birmingham-Southern College with a B.S. in Business Administration. She resides in Hendersonville, TN, with her husband and two children.

# Sheila Johnson

## Founder & CEO Salamander Hotels & Resorts



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Sheila Johnson is Founder and CEO of Salamander Hotels & Resorts (SHR), which operates a collection of luxury properties. SHR is ranked as one of the largest Minority-Owned WomenOwned Companies in the Washington DC Metro area.

SHR includes the equestrian-inspired Salamander Resort & Spa in Middleburg, Virginia, which has been awarded the distinguished Forbes Five Star rating for both the resort and spa. The collection also features Innisbrook in Tampa Bay; Hotel Bennett in Charleston, SC and Half Moon in Montego Bay, Jamaica, featuring a new resort experience, Eclipse. The most recent additions to the Salamander Collection are newly renovated Aurora Anguilla Resort & Club in Anguilla, the iconic Aspen Meadows Resort in Aspen, Colorado and Salamander Washington DC.

Additionally, Ms. Johnson has become a voice for the hospitality industry, serving on the Executive Committee for the American Hotel & Lodging Association and the Forbes Travel Guide Strategy Committee. Additionally, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce has appointed her to serve on the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board.

As Vice Chairman of Monumental Sports & Entertainment, Ms. Johnson is the only African American woman to have ownership in three professional sports teams: the NBA's Washington Wizards, the NHL's Washington Capitals, and the WNBA's Washington Mystics, for which she serves as President and Managing Partner.

Ms. Johnson co-founded Black Entertainment Television (BET), served as executive producer of documentary and feature films and is founder and chair of the Middleburg Film Festival

# Iris Junge

General Manager  
The Gwen Chicago



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Iris Junge is General Manager at The Gwen Chicago, a Luxury Collection Hotel. As a key member of the executive leadership team at the acclaimed property, Junge furthers the luxury hotel's mission of delivering unparalleled guest experiences while maintaining a dynamic environment for all employees.

Prior to joining The Gwen, Junge served as General Manager for the Allegro Royal Sonesta, previously the Kimpton Hotel Allegro, in Chicago. She also served as the Assistant General Manager of Hotel Allegro where she supported the hotel's overall operations, finances, and development of a high-performance team. Originally from Germany, Iris has over 20 years of hospitality experience working with Wyndham, Hard Rock, Starwood, and InterContinental Hotels.

Junge is also on the Board of Directors of the Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association, as well as on the Advisory Board for the DANK Haus, a cultural organization located in Chicago's Lincoln Square neighborhood. She notably supports the IHLA Educational Foundation and is a member of the IHLA Women in Lodging Chapter. Junge holds a Certificate from Cornell for Sales Growth and is a Certified Revenue Management Executive through HSMAI.

# Justin Knight

President & CEO  
Apple Hospitality REIT



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Mr. Knight joined the Apple REIT Companies in 2000 and has served as Chief Executive Officer of the Company since May 2014 and served as President of the Company from its inception to March 2020. Mr. Knight also served as President of each of the former Apple REIT Companies, except Apple Suites, until they were sold to a third party or merged with the Company. Mr. Knight held various senior management positions with the Apple REIT Companies prior to his appointment as President. Mr. Knight serves on the Marriott Owners Advisory Council, on the Residence Inn Association Board, and as Secretary, Treasurer and member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the American Hotel and Lodging Association. Mr. Knight also serves as a member of the National Advisory Council of the Marriott School at Brigham Young University, the Board of Trustees for Southern Virginia University, the Board of Trustees for The Valentine Museum, and the Board of Directors for Venture Richmond. Mr. Knight holds a Master of Business Administration degree with an emphasis in Corporate Strategy and Finance from the Marriott School at Brigham Young University. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, Cum Laude, in Political Science from Brigham Young University. Mr. Knight has been a member of the Company's Board of Directors since January 2015 and currently serves on the Executive Committee.

# Dayna Kully

Co-Founder & Partner  
5thGenWireless



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Dayna Kully is the co-founder and partner in 5thGenWireless, a consultancy which helps hoteliers and vendors develop strategies to capitalize on the paradigm shifts created by the Internet Revolution. 5thGenWireless advises companies on product and marketing strategies to best adapt current and emerging hospitality technology systems and solutions for the new Internet savvy guest while optimizing IT spend and operational efficiencies.

Dayna has over 40 years of experience in hospitality sales, channel development, marketing, and senior level management, specializing in technology. Dayna has held leadership roles in leading technology companies including AT&T, Corning, Enseo, General Electric, Northern Telecom, Sprint and Mitel Networks. Dayna also co-founded Brautovich/Kully, a marketing consultancy specializing in vertical market technology.

Dayna is an Executive Advisor to the HTNG/AHLA Executive Leadership Group (ELG) and has helped spawn, guide and co-chair workgroups on topics such as NextGen Infrastructure, 5G, CBRS, Cellular, Wi-Fi, Central Authentication, Passpoint/HS2.0 and Fiber-to-the-Room. Dayna is also active in AHLA Foundation initiatives, serving as a ForWard Ambassador, participating as a mentor in the eMentorConnect pilot and supporting Castel@College efforts to incorporate hospitality technology panelists.

Dayna is a professional networker and passionate about mentoring/coaching professional women and technology start-ups. Dayna holds a Bachelor's degree with honors in Economics from the University of California at Berkeley.

# Vera Manoukian

## Chief Operating Officer Sonesta International Hotels



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Vera Manoukian is a GLOBAL hospitality trailblazer with more than three decades of proven hospitality experience with a focus on driving brand growth, maximizing operational excellence and delivering financial performance. She serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Sonesta International Hotels, a leading global hotel company with more than 1,200 properties across 16 brands in eight countries.

In her role she oversees all aspects of the company's operations, commercial, brand, and marketing functions. This includes a focus on top-line revenue strategy including loyalty, distribution, revenue management and partnerships. Manoukian plays a critical role in leading strategic initiatives and driving the company's growth. As part of the company's expansion, she led brand defining and positioning efforts and created Sonesta's newest brands: Sonesta Select and Sonesta Simply Suites. Most recently, she led the expansion into New York City with the acquisition of four key properties.

Prior to joining Sonesta in November 2020, Manoukian served as the Global Head of the Hilton Brand at Hilton Worldwide Holdings, Inc., where she led the strategic direction, vision, and growth for nearly 600 properties in 95 countries. She previously served as Senior Vice President of Operations for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., where she was responsible for the company's largest geographic region, including seven brands, 68 full-service and luxury properties, and \$3.4 billion in annual revenue. Manoukian began her career in the hospitality industry as a part-time concierge at the storied Sheraton Wayfarer Inn in Bedford, NH.

Originally from Beirut, Lebanon, Manoukian speaks five languages, including English, French, Arabic, Armenian and Turkish. Manoukian holds an MBA from University of Southern New Hampshire and a bachelor's degree in Chemistry from Rivier University of New Hampshire. She previously served on the Board of Directors for the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) and Hotel Association of New York City. Currently, she serves on the Board of Directors for Little Sisters of the Poor, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the elderly. Additionally, she is a frequent speaker at the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series at the Boston University School of Hospitality. She is passionate about mentoring and is an executive sponsor of Sonesta's ELEVATE apprenticeship program supporting young professionals.

# Jessica Matthews

Innovator & CEO  
Uncharted



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Jessica O. Matthews is an award-winning entrepreneur, inventor, and social scientist with more than 10 years of demonstrated thought leadership in the future of smart cities, climate resiliency, and improving equitable access to infrastructure resources. She is the founder and CEO of Uncharted, a sustainable infrastructure company that helps cities reduce the cost of developing smart infrastructure worldwide. Through Uncharted, she has created a central hub that connects cities to innovative, cost-effective solutions essential to transforming their environments to be more intelligent and inclusive, while leveraging data to achieve the highest level of infrastructural operation and optimization. Called “the Elon Musk of kinetic energy” by former U.S. chief technology officer Megan Smith, her groundbreaking research and career center around the intersection of disruptive technology, renewable energy, human behavior, and the psychology of self-actualization.

Represented by [Leading Authorities speakers bureau](#), Jessica takes groups along her entrepreneurial journey as she reveals the evolution of an idea to generate energy from a soccer ball all the way through to the rise of a revolutionary technology company that is reshaping our cities for sustainable futures. Her candid, relatable approach inspires audiences to adapt, innovate, and create solutions to address the needs of people, businesses, and communities worldwide. Jessica’s motto, “Succeed, not despite of who you are, but because of who you are, unapologetically,” encourages individuals and organizations to embrace differences and recognize that personal struggle and challenges can give birth to solutions, if you let them.

Jessica’s career started at the age of 19 with her invention of the SOCKET, an energy-generating soccer ball. At the age of 22, Jessica founded Uncharted as a power solutions company before expanding to smart city infrastructure development that helps the citizens of small cities trust that they do not need to “leave where they are from to get where they are going.”

Jessica’s success in entrepreneurship led to a White House invitation from President Barack Obama to represent small companies for the signing of the America Invents Act in 2012. In 2016, she raised what was at the time the largest Series A round ever raised by a black female founder in history, and was selected to ring the NASDAQ opening ceremony bell, representing all *Forbes* 30 Under 30 alumni. In 2021, Jessica was officially appointed by Secretary of Energy Jennifer M. Granholm to the Electricity Advisory Committee. As a member of the Smart Grid subcommittee, she plays a key role in advising the Department of Energy on the ways we can modernize our nation’s electric delivery system, specifically focusing on accelerating the deployment of electric vehicle charging stations throughout the U.S.

# Connie McCauslin

Managing Director,  
Communications  
G6 Hospitality



Connie McCauslin is the Managing Director of Communications and Public Relations at G6 Hospitality, the parent company of the Motel 6 and Studio 6 brands. In this role she oversees all external and internal communications programs, as well as the organization's ESG efforts. An avid traveler, Connie is passionate about the brand's mission to ensure everyone has the right to travel.

Connie recently received her MBA from Tarleton State University and has a B.A. in Communication from Texas A&M University.

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# Eliza McCoy

VP, Awareness & Prevention  
AHLA Foundation



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McCoy will play a critical role in bolstering and expanding the No Room For Trafficking Program – a national initiative that builds on the industry’s ongoing commitment and work to end human trafficking. Additionally, McCoy will lead an effort to build a survivor’s fund for human trafficking victims. The fund is slated to provide long-term support and economic stability for survivors while advancing training and education to prevent human trafficking in the lodging industry.

For more than 15 years, McCoy has worked as a non-profit leader with expertise in law enforcement, program-centered fundraising, communication and development. Prior to joining the AHLA Foundation, McCoy served as an executive director at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children – where she led the organization’s transformation of outreach, training and prevention efforts. She also worked for the Center for Alexandria’s Children – helping expand the awareness and support of community-based programs to prevent and respond to child abuse. She began her career as an investigator with the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office after graduating from the Westchester County Police Academy in 2007. Bilingual in Spanish, she holds a bachelor’s degree from Georgetown University and a master’s degree from George Mason University.

# Keryn McNamara

SVP, Hotel Technology  
Aimbridge Hospitality



Keryn McNamara is a member of Aimbridge Hospitality’s senior IT leadership team, with an extensive background in hospitality operations and technology. In her role as SVP, Hotel Technology, Keryn leads a team of hotel technology specialists to deploy and support hotel-based technology solutions and provides leadership and oversight of key technology initiatives. She works closely with Aimbridge data and cyber security teams in building strong internal IT capabilities and relationships with strategic partners and service providers. Keryn joined Aimbridge in 2019 as Vice President, Hotel Technology and served in this role with Interstate Hotels & Resorts, which joined Aimbridge in October 2019. Keryn began her hospitality career with Omni Hotels & Resorts in roles from property Revenue Director, to Operations Director, to ultimately Vice President of Hotel Technology. She is a founding member and serves as Co-Chair for Aimbridge Women Excelling (A.W.E.) associate resource group. In addition, Keryn serves on the HITEC Advisory Council. In 2022, Keryn was named an “Influential Woman in Hospitality” by *Hotel Management* magazine, and in 2023, Keryn was recognized as a “Technology Rock Star” by *Hospitality Upgrade* magazine.

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# Shelley Meszoly

Area General Manager  
21c Museum Hotels



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Commercial voiceovers for the local radio station was her first part time job in high school, however, she really started her career in the Canadian Rockies at the iconic Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel in the housekeeping department. Shelley worked her way progressively through many operational departments and eventually found her niche in Sales & Marketing. Working at the world renown Canadian Rockies resorts, Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise and Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge, afforded her the privilege of marketing and selling these properties in North & South America, United Kingdom, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

When the long Canadian winters finally took their toll, she brought her sales expertise to Bermuda where she promoted the island in senior sales and marketing roles for over 15+ years, including Regional Director of Sales & Marketing for Accor Hotels, Caribbean. During this time, Shelley and her husband Greg raised their son, Mathew while enjoying the island life with friends and family golfing and boating. Next on her island journey was the role of Acting General Manager at Fairmont Royal Pavilion, Barbados where she was quickly reacquainted with her first love and realized it was time to get back into operations (and to the mainland).

When 21c was acquired by Accor, Shelley moved to the role of General Manager, 21c Museum Hotels, Cincinnati and has not looked back. She believes the most important parts of the business are her team, her guests, delivering financial results but not taking it all too seriously. A sense of humour, daily participation with the development of her team and interacting with her guest and owners are her passion. She is proud of 21c Cincinnati being named #1 Hotel in the Midwest in 2020 by Conde Nast Traveler, and being named General Manager of the Year in 2021 by the Ohio Hotel and Lodging Association. 21c Cincinnati was also named Leadership Team of the Year in 2022 by the Ohio Hotel and Lodging Association. She was promoted to Area General Manager in 2022 overseeing both 21c Cincinnati and 21c Nashville properties. Shelley is currently Co-Chair of the American Hotel and Lodging Associations General Manager Roundtable and enjoys being involved in the community as much as possible.

# Tom Morey

Executive Vice President &  
Chief Investment Officer  
Park Hotels & Resorts



Thomas C. Morey serves as Executive Vice President & Chief Investment Officer of Park Hotels & Resorts Inc. Prior to his appointment as Chief Investment Officer in January 2020, Mr. Morey served as Executive Vice President & General Counsel of Park Hotels & Resorts. Prior to joining Park Hotels & Resorts in August 2016, Mr. Morey served as Senior Vice President & General Counsel of Washington REIT (NYSE: WRE), a diversified real estate investment trust (REIT), from October 2008 until July 2016. Previously, Mr. Morey served as a corporate/M&A partner with Hogan & Hartson LLP, a multi-national law firm (now known as Hogan Lovells US LLP), where he represented lodging, multifamily, retail, office and other REITs in major corporate, acquisition and financing transactions. Mr. Morey received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University and his Juris Doctor degree from Duke Law School.

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# Malaika Myers

Executive Vice President &  
Chief Human Resource Officer  
Hyatt Hotels Corporation



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Malaika Myers has had a 25+ year career in Human Resources, working in the chemical, consumer products, and hospitality industries for public and private companies. She currently serves as EVP, Chief Human Resources Officer for Hyatt Hotels Corporation where she is responsible for the firm's human capital and talent strategy and works as a member of the Executive Committee to develop and execute the overall business strategy.

Prior to joining Hyatt Malaika led the global human resources function for Jarden Corporation. Before Jarden she served as CHRO for Arysta LifeScience, where she led the HR function through a transition in operating model and worked to prepare the company for an IPO/acquisition. Prior to Arysta Malaika served in various senior human resources roles at Diageo PLC, a global wine and spirits company.

Earlier in her career Malaika spent 10 years with PepsiCo. During her tenure there she held a variety of Human Resource positions with Frito-Lay, Pepsi-Cola and the PepsiCo Corporate organization. In her last role with PepsiCo she served as Vice President, Human Resources for the PepsiCo Sales organization. She started her career with FMC Corporation where she worked in a variety of human resources roles.

During her career Malaika has sponsored and led numerous change management efforts that have been transformational, including talent pipeline development, business operating model transformations, and cultural changes.

Malaika earned her Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Business from the State University of New York at Buffalo. She is a member of the Board of Directors for Cielo, the world's leading strategic Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) partner, a member of the Board of Directors for Skills for Chicagoland's Future, a Commissioner on the Village of Wilmette Human Relations Commission, and a member of the AHLA (American Hotel & Lodging Association) DE&I Taskforce, and the Advisory Council for ForWard – Women Advancing Hospitality.

# Stacey Nadolny

Senior Vice President  
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts



Stacey Nadolny joined Wyndham Hotels & Resorts as the Senior Vice President of Full-Service and Lifestyle brands, responsible for U.S., Canada, and Caribbean markets. Prior to joining WH&R, Stacey spent 16 years at HVS overseeing the Consulting and Valuation practice across the Midwest Region. While at HVS, she consulted on over 2,500 hotel projects, assisting developers with feasibility and market studies and advising owners across the country. She is a graduate of Cornell's School of Hotel Administration and has been working in the hospitality industry since age 12 when she started bussing tables at the restaurant where her mother worked. Stacey is very active in promoting women in hospitality, involved with the Castell Project, AHLA's ForWard, and Wyndham's Women Own the Room. When she is not on the road, Stacey enjoys all of the wonderful things Chicago has to offer.

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# Leydi Narajo

## General Manager The Buckingham Hotel



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I'm Leydi Naranjo, and I have been working in the hospitality industry for over 20 years. I started my career as a Front Desk Agent and have since had the opportunity to learn and grow in various roles, thanks to the guidance of a great female leaders who served as my mentor and who are now my friends.

I am deeply passionate about the hospitality industry and take pride in providing exceptional guest experiences. Throughout my career, I have gained expertise in guest relations, operations, and management, and have held positions in Front Office, Housekeeping, Maintenance and eventually rising to the role of General Manager for the first time in my current role.

As a lead manager, I have had the opportunity to lead diverse teams, implement innovative strategies for revenue management, and ensure high levels of guest satisfaction. It has been a rewarding experience to manage all aspects of hotel operations and work closely with my team to achieve our goals.

The mentorship of various female leaders throughout my career has been instrumental in my professional development. Their guidance, support, and mentorship have helped shape my skills and knowledge in the industry, and I am grateful for their influence on my career journey.

I am known for my strategic mindset, strong communication skills, and ability to inspire and empower my teams to achieve their best. I believe in fostering a positive work environment that promotes teamwork, creativity, and innovation.

In addition to my professional achievements, I am also a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion in the workplace. I believe in promoting gender equality and actively mentoring young professionals, particularly women, to help them succeed in the hospitality industry.

I am committed to continuous learning and growth, and I actively stay updated with the latest industry trends, attend conferences, and participate in training programs to enhance my skills and knowledge.

# Tracy Prigmore

Founder  
TLTsolutions  
She Has a Deal



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Tracy L. Prigmore is an award-winning executive and the Founder of TLTsolutions, a real estate investment and development firm that provides unparalleled access and insight to alternative investments. Tracy's mission is to empower people to build generational wealth, and through TLTsolutions she creates opportunities for individuals, families and entities to obtain passive income by investing in residential, multifamily and hotel projects.

As the sponsor for real estate investments, Tracy works with property management to maximize the value of each asset. She has a sterling record of bringing real estate ventures to life and maximizing their financial performance through sound asset management, as well as disciplined investment and renovation strategies. Currently, TLTsolutions has multi-million-dollar portfolio of real estate assets under management in four states. With the firm's launch of its first fund, Prosperity Fund I focused on lodging properties; TLTsolutions is actively pursuing acquisitions and redevelopment projects that will more than double its portfolio.

Chosen as Person of the Year by LODGING in 2021, recognized in 2022 as one of the 100 Most Powerful People in Global Hospitality by International Hospitality Institute (IHI), as well as Woman of the Year by Enterprising Women; Tracy is the creator of *She Has a Deal*, an EdTech platform, real estate investment accelerator and ecosystem that creates new pathways to commercial real estate ownership and development for women and people of color. She Has a Deal's renowned Hotel Investment Pitch Competition, SHaDPitch, is creating a pipeline of women owners and developers by preparing them to become sponsors and lead hotel investment projects. TLTsolutions recently established SHaD Prosperity Fund I and is raising capital to fund the women led projects originating from the pitch competition and the She Has a Deal platform.



# Chip Rogers

President & CEO  
AHLA



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Chip Rogers joined the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) as President and CEO in January 2019. AHLA is America's only national association dedicated to serving the interests of the entire hotel and lodging industry.

In his role as President & CEO, Chip has led the AHLA team and the lodging industry to achieve tangible results for AHLA members. Subsequently, he has received numerous awards and has been recognized as one of the 25 most influential by Business Travel News, as one of the most influential people in Washington D.C. by Washingtonian magazine, Top 50 Most Influential Leaders in Hospitality, USA, and Global by Hospitality Index, a Freedom Award recipient from ECPAT-USA and three times as a top lobbyist by the Hill newspaper.

Under Chip's leadership, AHLA was named as "100 Associations That Will Save the World" by ASAE, was honored with the White House "Presidential Award for its Pledge to America's Workers" and was recognized with the PR Week Purpose Awards 2020.

In addition to leading AHLA, Chip is a member of the board of directors for the United States Travel Association, Community Leaders of America, and the California Hotel & Lodging Association. Prior to joining the hospitality industry, Chip served in the Georgia General Assembly. He was elected to office six times and was unanimously elected twice to serve as Senate majority leader.

Chip earned his undergraduate degree from Georgia Tech and his MBA from Georgia State.

# Anu Sharma

SVP, Technology & Delivery  
Actabl



Anu Sharma is the SVP of Technology and Delivery at Actabl, the software company exclusively focused on meeting the evolving needs of leading hospitality businesses. In her role, she is responsible for defining and driving the technology strategy to enable Actabl as a choice platform for hotel operations and analytics. Anu is a technology leader with 20+ years of success in transforming teams, building innovative solutions to drive business outcomes. Her prior experience includes medical informatics, multi-family and automotive solutions. Anu is passionate about Girls and Women in STEM and building up women leadership in technology. Anu has a bachelors and a master degree in Computer Science. She lives in Southlake, TX with her husband and 2 girls. She enjoys running, reading and traveling with family in her free time.

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# Linda Theisen

Vice President  
Hilton Supply Management



Linda Theisen is an authentically fearless leader who combines a people-first approach with a strong force of presence. At HSM, she leads the Category Management teams including F&B, OS&E, Property Operations, FF&E and all Corporate functions as well as the Project Procurement team. Through an authentic and consistent approach, she is a trusted advisor to supply partners, senior leadership and direct reports. Linda has many years of experience in direct procurement as well as corporate categories, including marketing, facilities, logistics, IT, HR and professional services.

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# Kim Twiggs

AVP, Product Development  
DIRECTV



As an Associate Vice President of DIRECTV, Kim manages the company's Hospitality & Institutions business unit which includes creating and implementing strategies that support the sale of DIRECTV free-to-guest programming and products to hotels, hospitals, senior living facilities and universities. Kim's team leads both direct and indirect sales and distribution, including a network of more than 200 in-room television integrator partners. Products sold through these distribution channels include the Advanced Entertainment Platform (AEP), DIRECTV Residential Experience (DRE) and COM3000, through which guests can access hundreds of HD channels, premium On Demand, Over The Top and Streaming content. Previously, Kim oversaw the development and growth of DIRECTV's Multi-Dwelling Unit (MDU) business. Kim has been with DIRECTV since 2006 and lives in Colorado with her husband, George and their kids, Jax and Alexandra.

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# Liz Uber

Chief Operating Officer  
Extended Stay America



Liz Uber is currently the COO of Extended Stay America, holding this position since mid-December 2022. Liz has extensive hospitality experience in operations, asset management, and sales/revenue management. Prior to ESA, Liz served as Senior Vice President of Operations at Aimbridge Hospitality, where she oversaw a team managing 100 hotels. She previously was responsible for large hotel portfolios as a VP of Asset Management at BRE Hotels & Resorts and as SVP of Revenue, Sales, and eCommerce at Pillar Hotels. Liz is based in North Dallas (TX) with her husband, three children, and large screen TV so she can root on her beloved Texas A&M Aggies.

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# Eva Wassermann

Senior Managing Partner  
GEM Realty Capital



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Eva Wassermann has been actively involved in the hospitality industry for over 35 years. Ms. Wassermann joined GEM in 2012 to oversee its hospitality investment platform. She divides her time equally between asset management and acquisitions and is responsible for the management of GEM's hotel assets working closely with acquisitions to source investments in the lodging sector. Ms. Wassermann is directly involved in all facets of asset management including development, renovation, management, and financing decisions, as well as budget review, approval and asset disposition.

Prior to joining GEM she established and was the principal of State Parkway Advisory, a consulting platform providing both hotel acquisitions and asset management assistance to hotel owners. Ms. Wassermann spent three years working exclusively for Goldman Sachs and their various Whitehall Real Estate funds.

Ms. Wassermann also served for six years as the Vice President, North Central Region, Managed Development, for Hilton Hotels Corporation where she was responsible for all corporate development in the Eastern US. Previously, Ms. Wassermann also held the position of Vice President at Strategic Hotels & Resorts in both asset management and acquisitions, was a Senior Vice President at the Yarmouth Group in acquisitions and asset management, worked as a Manager with Kenneth Leventhal & Co., and as a Senior Consultant within the hospitality consulting group of Laventhol & Horwath.

Ms. Wassermann serves on the Advisory Board for The Collins School of Hospitality Management where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Hospitality Management. She also served on the President's National Development Council for Cal Poly Pomona as the Vice Chair, Foundation Giving, for Cal Poly Pomona's Comprehensive Campaign.

# JoAnn Wrenn

General Manager  
The Logan Hotel



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JoAnn Wrenn is the General Manager of The Logan Hotel, where she oversees all day-to-day operations of the 391-room address on Logan Square in downtown Philadelphia, including departmental management, sales and marketing, recruitment, and ensuring an authentic hospitality experience for guests inspired by the heart and soul of the City of Brotherly Love.

Wrenn arrived at The Logan with over 25 years of hospitality management experience from JW Marriott Denver Cherry Creek, where as General Manager for four years she cultivated a collaborative team and created a climate of creative thinking, innovation and superior service. The hotel was the second in Denver to tap Wrenn's talents: She also spent four years first as Area Director of Sales & Marketing, then as General Manager of The Curtis Denver – A Doubletree by Hilton Hotel.

Previously, Wrenn rose in management on the sales side at luxury and upscale hotel and resort properties, including as Senior Travel Industry Sales Manager at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island in Florida; Director of Sales at The Paramount Hotel, an Ian Schrager property in New York City; Director of Sales & Marketing at Wyndham Bristol Hotel in Washington, DC; and Director of Sales at Wyndham Dublin Hotel in Ohio. Wrenn got her start in the industry as a Front Desk Associate at Wyndham San Antonio Hotel in San Antonio, Texas.

# Monica Xuereb

Chief Commercial Officer  
Loews Hotels & Co



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As Chief Commercial Officer, Monica Xuereb leads Loews Hotels & Co's Commercial strategy, including oversight of the key disciplines of Revenue Management, Sales & Marketing, Catering & Conference Services, Brand, Communications, e-Commerce, Distribution and the Customer Engagement Center.

She brings nearly three decades of strategic thinking, data-driven decision-making, collaboration and industry expertise to the New York-based Hospitality Company, which owns and operates 26 hotels in the United States and Canada.

Since joining Loews in 2013, Xuereb has focused on gaining market share and driving top-line revenue and profitability, by building strong business acumen amongst hotel commercial teams, along with fostering a data-driven approach to all segments of the business.

A tenured hotelier, she previously ran her own consultancy for more than three years, providing assistance with revenue management, pricing and distribution strategies to independent hoteliers and small hotel groups such as Dorchester Collection, Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, Morgans Hotel Group and Viceroy Hotels and Resorts.

Additionally, Xuereb spent 17 years in total with The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and Marriott International, holding several senior Revenue Management positions at the regional, area and property levels, including Vice President of Revenue Management, International, where she oversaw the yield strategies of 34 Ritz-Carlton and Bvlgari Hotels in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Today she remains active within our industry, sitting on the board for American Hotel & Lodging Association's ForWard: Women Advancing Hospitality and is also an active participant on the IDeaS Advisory Board.