



HOTEL MANAGEMENT

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

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A SUPPLEMENT TO HOTEL MANAGEMENT

THIRTY UNDER

30

THE HOTEL INDUSTRY'S

TOP RISING STARS





SAAJAN B. PATEL

VP, operations, Mirage Hospitality, Houston

Tell us about your experience in hospitality before now, and what made you choose hospitality as a career?

My parents bought their first property in 1988 and we used to live onsite until 2001. With my father guiding me, I used to help him out

around the property and gained valuable experience and lessons from him, from cleaning rooms, checking in and out guests to doing property maintenance. When I was about 16 years old, my father gave me the role of vice president of operations and placed full confidence in me to run the property. I then came to realize that my work ethic and passion lay in the hospitality industry. In September of 2015, I obtained my Certified Hotel Owner certification, and my Certification in Hotel Industry Analytics in November of 2016. I am currently the vice president, operations at Mirage Hospitality, a Houston-based management and development company. In 2016, I, along with my best friend Miraj Patel, formed Mirage Hospitality.



MARLEEN PEREZ

Human resources manager, Hilton West Palm Beach (Fla.)

What is the most pressing challenge you've faced on the job in the last year? How did you resolve it?

The most pressing challenge on the job was ensuring I filled all of our positions within 30 days, which is our corporate standard. Although

we were a new hotel with turnover, we were still held to the highest standard and metrics were very crucial. I had to get creative when it came to sourcing and finding the right candidates. This included long hours, networking with the community and local colleges, geotargeting on Facebook, utilizing Craigslist and attending job fairs at colleges and local events. I also ensured we had referral programs and sign-on bonuses for positions in engineering and culinary as needed. Even now my numbers are lower than our corporate standard of 30 days to fill; currently my average days to a requisition being filled is 28, and my average days to offer is 21 days.



SAWAN PATEL

Managing partner, Unify Hotels Group, Houston

What is the biggest concern or threat facing the success of the global hotel industry, and how would you propose addressing it?

The biggest threat we are facing today is unregulated home-rental companies who are being allowed to steal

hotel guests without having to pay their fair share in taxes, and without having to abide by local, state and federal regulations. An example of this is Airbnb. I believe the hotel industry needs to work to tackle this issue now, rather than later, otherwise we will be left behind like the taxi industry when Uber and Lyft came into play. My work with [the Asian American Hotel Owners Association and local organizations such as the Texas Hotel and Lodging Association and the Small Independent Motel Association of Houston include visiting Capitol Hill in D.C. biannually and the Texas State Capitol annually to meet and speak with our elected officials to fight for these types of issues that affect our industry.



GREG PRESCOTT

Director of new business & talent management, Columbia Hospitality, Seattle

Global hotel companies are focusing very much on attracting travelers from your generation. If you could tell the industry, "Hey! This is what we really want in a hotel stay," what would you say?

Experiential travel. I travel frequently and am constantly striving to find the next unique, authentic and memorable experience. Hotels must capture every detail to create a seamless brand and identity. From arrivals to signature cocktails and programming—everything must be uniquely independent and cohesive. As hoteliers, it's important to remember that the experience is your most valuable marketing tool! Everything depends on the interactions your guests have on every step of their journey. Why? Because each person has a printing press and camera in their pocket, and they use these tools to share every element of their experience with their friends and family across their social network. So make it wow, every step of the way.

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DANIELLE RAKOWITZ

Digital content producer, Wyndham Hotel Group, Montville, N.J.

Tell us about any awards, accolades or positive feedback you have received in your career thus far.

Executive leadership wanted to enhance team visibility across the revenue-generation organization at Wyndham Hotel Group. I had the opportunity to partner with a colleague to plan an interactive

event for over 150 participants. Our objective was to increase the understanding of how cross-functional teams operate, and to demonstrate how each area plays a role in reaching our company's goals. After a successful event, executive leadership recognized me with a Count On Me! award, which is quite an honor at Wyndham. I've been fortunate to receive additional internal awards for helping to facilitate new brand integrations digitally. Additionally, I served in a leadership capacity in a new career-development program serving as a mentor for colleagues looking to acquire new skills in the digital landscape. The output of the project I led will be implemented, which is exciting.

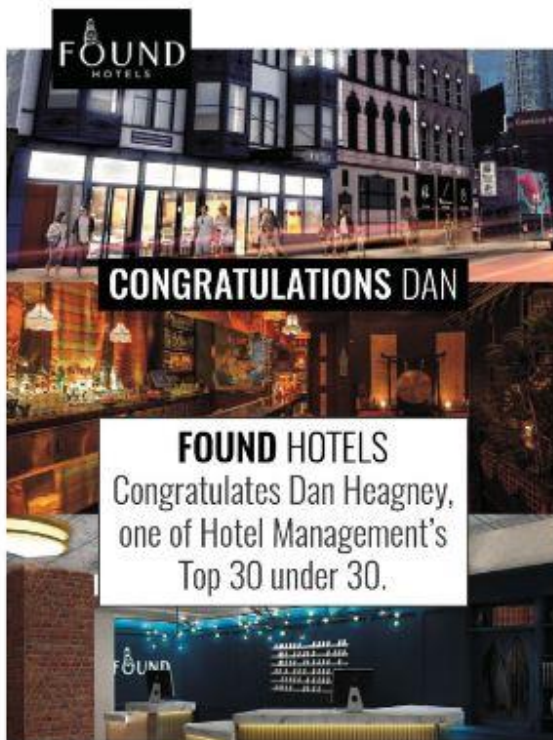


CHELSEA SALAMONE

Senior investment analyst, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, San Francisco

A big issue facing the hotel industry today is attracting and retaining good employees. Please share some candid thoughts on the pros and cons of working in the hotel industry.

During my time on-property I would always ask why "people" (owners) wouldn't spend the money to repair a service elevator to improve a housekeeper's experience, or buy new, shiny silverware to prevent groups from complaining. The con in the hotel industry is that, at the end of the day, hotels are a business. A big element that revolves around businesses is profitability and growth. Hotels will be less profitable the more money that is invested in them, so owners have to be strategic and prioritize capital expenditures, renovations, etc. They have to balance—which sometimes hinders operations and employee happiness. When owners and managers work to manage the balance between happiness, operations and profitability is when I see the most success in attracting and retaining good employees.



OMG!
CONGRATULATIONS

Columbia Hospitality applauds

GREG PRESCOTT

Director of New Business & Talent Management

on being named one of Hotel Management's Thirty Under 30. Greg is a shining example of OMG every day,

(Own the Values, Make it Fun, Get it Done)!



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