

## 2022 HSMAI SPECIAL REPORT

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# HSMAI Top 25 Extraordinary Minds in Sales, Marketing, Revenue Optimization and Distribution

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Lessons in Leadership, Creativity, and Innovation



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### INTRODUCTION



**By Robert A. Gilbert, CHME, CHBA**

President and CEO, Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI)

HSMAI's Top 25 Extraordinary Minds in Sales, Marketing, Revenue Optimization and Distribution program recognizes leaders in sales, marketing, and revenue optimization from hospitality, travel, and tourism organizations for their accomplishments in the preceding year. This special report profiles each individual on this distinguished list of hospitality superstars, selected by a panel of senior industry executives based on their recent work. These professionals have demonstrated creativity and innovation, cutting-edge sales and marketing campaigns, and efforts that resulted in dramatic gains. Their work ethic, drive, and leadership can be used as inspiration for us all as we navigate the ever-changing hospitality landscape.



### Hege V. Barnes

#### MANAGING DIRECTOR

Innovation Norway



Hege is responsible for the overall management of the operations in New York, Houston and Canada of Innovation Norway, a government entity for trade and industries. Hege has built a solid team of experts that assists Norwegian companies and entrepreneurs enter, scale, and grow successfully in North America, and that efficiently promotes Norway as a travel destination. Hege sits on the board of Nordic Innovation House-New York and the Norwegian American Chamber of Commerce and have successfully founded the competence building scale-up program Entrepreneurial Marketing NY. Hege has a master's in international business and love all aspects of creative development, innovative thinking and working with people and companies that strives to make a difference in the world.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Hege had the vision for and conceptualized the SIR-Sustainability is Responsibility program together with USTOA (US Tour Operators Association), that educates and motivates executives from the global tourism industry to implement sustainability into their business models.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Her leadership and involvement throughout the process has positioned her as one of the industry's foremost authorities on sustainability and how the industry needs to be thinking about sustainability as a potential source for profit, and not a burden."

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#### Q&A with Hege Barnes

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##### What keeps you inspired?

People that make a difference in this world and that are not afraid to show it or challenge norms. I also find inspiration in my work – when I am allowed to be creative and progressive in finding new solutions or new ways to work together to solve a problem. The collaborative spirit of the tourism industry and the work we do with USTOA and Tourism Cares to bring awareness, educate, and commit to sustainable business models inspires and motivates me, and gives me hope.

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

Travel more! See the world and gain experiences from meeting people from other countries and backgrounds. Get educated and enjoy the lessons that exploring different societies, cultures and traditions can give you. It will lead to more insightful and valuable decisions later in life.



### Susan Barr

#### **VICE PRESIDENT ONE YIELD**

Marriott International



Sue has 38 years of hospitality and industry experience. She began her career with Marriott after Graduating from the University of Missouri as a Front Office Manager. She moved into Reservations before the launch of the Revenue Management discipline. Over the many years with Marriott Sue has been promoted to more senior revenue management roles taking on greater and greater leadership responsibilities. From leading hotel cluster strategies to regional oversight of US and Canada hotels and at Marriott International Headquarters where she is responsible for Marriott's proprietary industry leading revenue management platform One Yield. One Yield enables revenue optimization across all our 30 brands, 8, 100+ hotels and more than 1.1M rooms across the Globe. Sue is a proud graduate of the University of Missouri and takes an active role within the alumni association and frequent guest lecturer encouraging more students to consider career in hospitality.

#### **KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

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With Sue's leadership and insights partnering with our global technology partners with a much smaller team than pre-pandemic levels they implemented the forecasts improvements across all hotels in less than 6 months. Something of this magnitude across that number of hotels had never been done before within our Revenue Management system.

#### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?**

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"Sue's commitment, determination, and tenacity in spearheading the efforts to reimagine and improve our key forecasts driving more profitable topline revenues and recognizing the need to leverage automation when staffing levels in our hotels had been reduced. Sue is always thinking one step ahead with the mindset of an Owner and practicality of Hotel Operator."

### Paul Beirnes

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Naples, Marco Island, and  
the Everglades CVB



Paul Beirnes has over 30 years of experience in the hospitality and tourism industry. He is an exceptionally creative marketing leader with the ability to apply strategic and strong analytical skills. Paul has consistently implemented milestone campaigns and launches within Hilton Corporate, The Walt Disney Company, Visit Orlando, TrizecHahn Development and the Naples, Marco Island, Everglades CVB.

His career roles have included theme park brand management, ticketing strategies, theme park grand openings, cruise line launch, partnership development, global consumer campaigns, broadcast marketing, hotel marketing, e-Commerce, CRM, finance, business operations, customer service, B2B, public relations, marketing plan development, strategic planning and leading destination marketing organizations.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades Florida area enjoyed record-setting tourism metrics in post Pandemic Fiscal Year 21-22 as a result of the global marketing campaign that Paul Beirnes developed and implemented.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

“Paul has an impressive ability to create major corporate and sport organization partnerships, and he has strong knowledge of startup businesses such as the development of the Planet Hollywood Miracle Mile Shops in Las Vegas.”

#### Q&A with Paul Beirnes

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#### What keeps you inspired?

Inspiration is achieved by constantly identifying the impact that my efforts have within the destination, as well as the impact upon the lives of those employed within the industry.

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

Never stop listening to your instincts. Believe in yourself and avoid being your own worst critic. Love what you do at all times and never waste time with those that are not positive. Save as much as you can and invest early.

### Shane Brossard

#### CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER

Wisconsin Department of Tourism



A tourism professional for more than 10 years, Travel Wisconsin Chief Marketing Officer Shane Brossard leads the development and execution of strategic marketing plans with a data-driven integrated marketing approach. A Wisconsin native, he joined the Travel Wisconsin team in 2012 as a Web and Interactive Project Manager, spending three years growing Travel Wisconsin's web presence. Soon, he was promoted to Director of Marketing and a subsequent restructuring expanded his role to Director of Marketing and Advertising.

In his current role as Chief Marketing Officer, Brossard aligns department staff, advertising agency partners and tourism industry stakeholders to elevate the Wisconsin brand and increase visits to Wisconsin, driving economic impact and creating jobs across the state. Since leading the Travel Wisconsin campaigns in 2015, tourism's economic impact has grown by \$2.9 billion, resulting in Wisconsin tourism's best year on record in 2019.

#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

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The "Here's To Those Who Wisconsin" campaign ran in 12 markets with a bigger spend and deeper reach than any previous campaign in Travel Wisconsin's history. It produced over 659 million impressions, a whopping 41% increase over the 2021 summer campaign. In turn, those impressions earned more than 2.8 million clicks to TravelWisconsin.com, marking a 37% increase over 2021. While more impressions and clicks are to be expected with increased spend, the efficiencies optimized throughout the campaign dramatically outpaced the increase in spend.

#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

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"As a natural leader and forward-thinking marketer, Brossard and his team have taken Travel Wisconsin's marketing and advertising program to the next level. Brossard has helped grow TravelWisconsin.com web traffic from 2 million visitors a year to more than 10 million, making Wisconsin a top 5 state for tourism website traffic."

### Natasha Caputo

#### **DIRECTOR**

Westchester County Tourism & Film



Natasha Caputo has decades of experience supporting tourism in New York. In her current role, as Director of Westchester County Tourism & Film, Caputo leads the promotion of Westchester as a viable business environment and leisure travel destination and is a driving force behind the county's burgeoning film scene. Recently, Caputo has been appointed to the New York State Tourism Advisory Council by Governor Kathy Hochul.

Prior, she was a consultant for brands like Madison Square Garden and Cirque du Soleil, and Caputo served eight years running the strategic marketing and partnership operations of New York City's tourism agency, NYC & Company.

Under Caputo's leadership, tourism marketing efforts for Westchester County have been hailed by premier trade groups, most recently earning the PRNews Platinum Award for content marketing. This prestigious honor follows on the heels of other accolades for Westchester County Tourism in the last year, including a Bronze Anvil from the Public Relations Society of America and a Gold Adrian Award from HSMAI.

#### **KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

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Due to Natasha's pandemic-era marketing efforts, Westchester County has been able to hold its own and return to normalcy. As of 2019, tourism spending within the county had grown to \$2.01 billion, a record. And despite the economic hit taken during 2020, Westchester visitor spending still represented 45% of all visitor spending in the Hudson Valley region. The county ranked third in visitor spending in New York State behind NYC and Long Island. All told, travel contributed \$8.8 billion to the County economy in the last five years and \$17.4 billion in the last ten years.

#### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?**

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"Natasha is equal parts intelligence, passion and boundless energy. She is 100% committed to her work and to making Westchester County's tourism and film location efforts as successful as they can be. She is a staunch supporter of the hotel community and all of the county's tourism partners. She goes above and beyond on a daily basis to lead the charge and to be a conduit to members of her constituency so they can be as successful as possible."



### Shelley Cooper

#### DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

Colorado Tourism Office



Shelley Cooper brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the tourism industry. Its these success and experiences with such notable brands as Nike, Proctor & Gamble, Dollar General, Coca-Cola, Odwalla and others that have driven Shelley's success in marketing Colorado.

Shelley has an MBA from Georgia State University/ University of New South Wales with a BS in Advertising, & minor in English/Creative Writing from Florida State University

#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

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The Colorado Fall campaign was extremely successful, directly influencing 2.2 million trips and \$3.3 billion in spending. By adding a fall campaign, CTO spent 22% more on media; that investment resulted in a 54% increase in the number of incremental trips, a 57% increase in influenced spending, and a 28% increase in ROI.

The elevation of the DEI campaign resulted in notably higher campaign recall among our Hispanic (20%) and Black (39%) audiences as well as the addition of a partner-adopted media co-op program specifically tailored to diverse audiences, including Black and LGBTQ+ visitors.

#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

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"Shelley was ahead of the curve promoting stewardship through statewide partnerships demonstrating the power of messaging to communities experiencing all levels of tourism recovery. She embraces new social opportunities that have led to high levels of measurable success. Shelley's efforts and successes have inspired our partners, agencies, communities, and entire staff at the Colorado Tourism Office."

### Dax Cross

#### CEO

Revenue Analytics



Dax co-founded Revenue Analytics 17 years ago. Prior to co-founding Revenue Analytics, he was an attorney at the law firm of King & Spalding LLP. Over the past 17 years, Dax Cross has partnered with clients to create dynamic Pricing and Revenue Management capabilities that have delivered over \$1 billion in organic revenue growth. He has strong cross-industry expertise, but with a particular focus on Travel and Hospitality.

Dax Cross has lectured on topics such as Revenue Management, forecasting, Price Optimization and performance measurement at Revenue Management conferences, industry conferences, Cornell University and Emory University, Goizueta Business School.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Dax not only encourages his customers and the industry to 'reimagine how we work' and to be more strategic, but he also practices what he preaches! Listening to industry leaders and serving as a thought leader himself to push us all forward. The results of these improvements: happy, more efficient hoteliers!

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"He's a humble leader who listens to his team, his customers, and finds ways to make sure they all succeed. Dax likes to talk about things internally as "Win/Win/Win" making sure that he finds wins for our people, our customers, and our company in everything we do."

#### Q&A with Dax Cross

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#### What keeps you inspired?

I get energized and inspired by working with great people to innovate and drive growth. I'm fortunate to work with bright, talented and fun people at Revenue Analytics, our clients, and our partners.

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

Time is a precious resource, and using it is an investment. Balance your investments to cultivate success across personal, family, friends and business endeavors.

### Michael Curran, CHDM

#### VICE PRESIDENT OF ECOMMERCE STRATEGY

Aimbridge Hospitality



Michael Curran has a background in the hospitality industry that spans over 28 years from property level to corporate leadership at Wyndham, Walt Disney Parks & Resorts, and Aimbridge, as well as work for national marketing agencies. The majority of his time has been focused on Internet marketing and advertising.

As the VP of eCommerce Strategy for Aimbridge, Michael oversees a team dedicated to the support of independent and soft-branded hotels and resorts across North America. His work has earned his clients 7 HSMAI Adrian Awards. Michael has been a CHDM since the first year of the program, along with GAIQ (Google Analytics Certification), Google Ads Search certification, and Google Ads Display certification.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Curran is constantly looking to the future of marketing and what can drive qualified stays and improved costs. Curran oversaw a significant expansion in Aimbridge's relationship with HotelPlanner.com. During the peak of covid issues, he reorganized and lead new general content strategies, promotional strategies, and property-level execution for just over 1000 properties on the service. As the effects of covid caused marketing funds to be reduced, Curran led another initiative to source low-cost but highly qualified guest reach through OTT campaigns.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Michael is the most knowledgeable and hardest-working digital marketer I have ever known. When I started working on Hilton.com in 1996 he was at the Hilton Chicago and the first on-property person who actually understood the possibilities of the internet at the time. We partnered to be innovative and drive advanced tactics. In addition to all of his knowledge, Curran has a heart of gold and cares deeply for his coworkers, friends, and family."

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#### Q&A with Michael Curran

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##### What keeps you inspired?

That fact that it is impossible to know everything there is to know about our industry. It doesn't matter how long you've been around or how much you do with your time, there is ALWAYS something new you can learn and always some piece of knowledge just waiting to be plucked.

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

Getting the experience you need to help advance yourself and your company is as simple as just showing up, and keep showing up, to as many things as you can. The best experience comes from interactions with others who already have the experience you want. Consistently showing up, even if you don't actually do anything most of the time, builds confidence in others who will in turn have confidence in you, and in turn will give you the experience you want.

### Cristina DiStefano, CHDM

#### **DIRECTOR OF ENTERPRISE MARKETING**

Oneida Nation Enterprises



After receiving her Masters in Hospitality Studies from NYU, Cristina DiStefano's entry into the hospitality industry was over 12 years ago at HEBS Digital – working with various hospitality clients on their digital strategies. Overseeing some of the more strategic accounts, Cristina was able to quickly grow her knowledge of the industry as she worked with boutique hotels, multi-property brands, management companies and more. Currently, Cristina is the Director of Enterprise Marketing at Oneida Nation Enterprises, and sits on the HSMAI Marketing Advisory Board. In her role at ONE she has grown from a team of two to a team of eleven as they tackle all facets of hospitality from resort, gaming, recreation, and more.

#### **KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

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Our organization now strategically communicates with our guests via email marketing from various angles. With Cristina's initiatives, our organization was able to recruit employees (hiring emails), drive show ticket sales, increase room reservations, and increase casino player visits.

#### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?**

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"Cristina is an effective problem solver and creative thinker who values her team and industry. She truly loves her job and continues to motivate those around her to innovate and collaborate for the company's success."



### Laurie Garzon

#### **DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING WAILEA BEACH RESORT**

Marriott



Laurie Garzon, Director of Sales & Marketing at Wailea Beach Resort – Marriott, Maui, has dedicated close to two decades to the luxury tourism industry, all of which have been spent rising through the ranks at various Marriott International properties. Most recently, Laurie's unmatched rigor and competitive sales placed Wailea Beach Resort as a consistent Marriott Top Performer in North America in 2021 and 2022. In addition, Laurie's leadership and robust customer engagement allowed her to lead through the pandemic and serve as an integral piece in setting Wailea Beach Resort up for success, rising above pre-pandemic levels.

#### **KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

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Laurie revamped Wailea Beach Resort's positioning for greater appeal to a luxury audience including website redevelopment, social media management, award-winning campaigns, and strategic partnerships. Laurie's expertise in luxury positioning, sales strategy, and destination messaging can be seen through all sales channels and segments.

#### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?**

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"Laurie is a shining example of how compassionate, authentic, and enthusiastic leadership leads to outstanding performance and results. She strives for excellence in all things and does it with kindness and respect, while maintaining an incredibly positive spirit that fosters collaboration. She has created a team culture built on trust, respect, support, and fun, which enables everyone to show up authentically and give their best – not because they have to but because they want to."

### Richard Geiger

#### **PRESIDENT**

Visit Winston-Salem



Richard Geiger is an accomplished hospitality and management industry professional with over 40 years of experience in destination marketing, strategic planning, staff development, sales training, and facility management. In February 2010, Geiger became the President of Visit Winston-Salem (convention and visitors bureau). As a strong downtown Winston-Salem advocate, Geiger also serves on the Boards of the Downtown Winston-Salem Partnership and the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Richard serves on the boards of the North Carolina Travel and Tourism Coalition and North Carolina Travel Industry Association

#### **KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

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Richard Geiger was instrumental in leading city and community leaders through the process of securing a \$20 million reinvention for the Benton Convention Center and securing the support of the City/County Public Arts Commission to fund the public arts installation of North Carolina-based artists in the newly refreshed Benton. The Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem now boasts 150,000 square feet of reimagined space, while enhancing connectivity to the city's vibrant and walkable downtown district.

#### **WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?**

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"Richard helped bring together community stakeholders, meeting planners, and public art advocates to create something special for the meetings industry and Winston-Salem. The commitment from local tourism and business partners, as well as Winston-Salem residents, shows a next-level pride that is conveyed to meeting planners and attendees in a very authentic way."

### Kristi Gole

#### EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Global Hotel Alliance



Kristi Gole is a passionate commercial leader responsible for the core product (the GHA DISCOVERY loyalty program), its roadmap and its growth at Global Hotel Alliance (GHA). GHA is the world's largest alliance of independent hotel brands with 40 brands and 800 hotels across 100 countries. Kristi was part of the original team in this start-up and helped build the brand, the global marketing team, and the first-of-its-kind experiential loyalty program from the ground-up. GHA DISCOVERY has won over 100 awards for its innovations and now has 23 million members driving US\$2B in revenue.

#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

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After leading an exploratory project in 2019, in 2020 Kristi was selected to lead an alliance-wide transformation, changing everything from the value proposition to the business model, to the technology, marketing and digital experience. Working closely with her CEO, she secured funding and approvals across hundreds of stakeholders and set out on the biggest project her company had undertaken.

#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

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"Kristi is a strong leader who worked tirelessly on this transformation project over a period of 3 years and it has been incredibly exciting to see it come to life and with such positive results."

#### Q&A with Kristi Gole

#### What keeps you inspired?

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I love learning. I love seeing new things, from different vantage points, and expanding my perspective. I'm a creative type and am always connecting the dots, so it excites me to be exposed to more 'dots' – I actively seek to be involved in, and have visibility to, as much as possible.

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

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1) Upskill as much as possible early on. It becomes harder to make time for that later in your career due to other priorities. For example, I wish I had taken courses on photoshop, or learned to code, or learned another language. All of those are not necessary for my job and I can lean on tools or colleagues for that instead, but I wish I had those skills and my 20s would have been a great time to learn them. I am very glad I did my MBA, though I wish that had been earlier too – balancing that on top of my job, and work travel, plus a toddler at home, was completely exhausting. Doing that in my 20s, with a less demanding role and no kids at the time, would have been smarter.

2) I think management consulting as a first or second job out of college would have been very useful. Understanding how businesses work and grow, and gaining exposure to that across various industries would be incredibly valuable as a foundation. And similar to point #1 – the hours are very demanding, so doing that early on, before kids and other priorities, would be easiest.

### Michael Klein

#### VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL REVENUE MANAGEMENT

Hyatt Hotels Corporation



Michael is an accomplished hospitality commercial strategy professional with over fifteen years of experience at major chains, including his current role as Global Vice President of Revenue Management at Hyatt Hotels Corporation. He oversees global revenue strategy, advanced analytics & business intelligence, global vendor management & revenue management systems.

Previously, Michael held revenue strategy & analytics roles with MGM Resorts International, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, & Fairmont Hotels & Resorts. Michael also worked as a strategy consultant for Duetto, makers of cloud-based hotel revenue management software and revenue strategy solutions.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Recently Michael took on the task of evaluating current technology serving his RM community, and seeking out solutions to connect Sales- Revenue Management- and Marketing together by way of next generation capabilities. Consistent with his tenacity to never settle, Michael ensured all areas of the business were served through evaluation of solutions and ultimately selection of Enterprise wide software to be installed across all of Hyatt.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

“Michael did not let the pain of change prohibit the need to drive the business forward. With vision and guts, Michael drove others across the organization to embark on a major milestone in hospitality - connecting the entire commercial organization through technology.”

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#### Q&A with Michael Klein

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##### What keeps you inspired?

My beautiful wife and children. The wonderful humans I work with at Hyatt. The beauty all around me as I travel the world.

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

Treat every day as if it's your last! Do not stop learning, and make sure what you are learning is not all for your career. The world is too large not to be curious about things outside of your day-to-day job. Lastly, family and work life balance are integral for you to truly be successful in life. Make time and commit!



### Melissa Kouvelas

#### SENIOR DIRECTOR OF WORLDWIDE SALES

BWH Hotel Group



As Senior Director of Worldwide Sales for BWH Hotel Group, Melissa Kouvelas specializes in global sales strategies for new business, existing account growth and key account development. Melissa's extensive experience in the industry has its foundation in a variety of on-property roles. This provided her with a holistic view of hospitality that she has since leveraged to continuously grow, hone and implement her wide array of skills.

Melissa is very involved in the industry and has been recognized for her leadership. As a member of the HSMAI Sales Advisory Board, Melissa leveraged her passion for career development in future industry leaders to form the first HSMAI Rising Leaders Council in Sales, launched in 2019 and has since grown to include a council in Marketing and Revenue Management, giving our future leaders an opportunity to learn and explore what the industry as to offer.

#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

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Melissa's hybrid solution (Account Development and Account Management) had the flexibility to use her team's skills to service and support their clients, like providing virtual office visits to activate the travelers to use BWH properties.

#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

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"Melissa is an incredible leader and extremely smart. She is always looking to increase revenue and drive market share to our properties. She always thinks about the big picture with no limits. She takes care of her team and works with them on efficiency, accountability, and transparency."

### Sabrina Lillew

#### VICE PRESIDENT OF LOYALTY PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Accor



Sabrina Lillew's hospitality career spans over 30+ years. She started her career at The Fairmont Royal York where she held various roles in Accounting and Tour & Travel Sales before moving to Corporate Headquarters in 2000. She now has 15+ years of loyalty experience and uses her background in marketing, sales, and customer service to support her in her current role as Vice President, Loyalty Programs & Partnerships where she determines the strategy, marketing, and operation of Accor's B2C and B2B loyalty and certificate programs along with partnerships for North & Central America.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

The launch of a reimagined loyalty program – ALL – Accor Live Limitless – was hampered due to the pandemic. In spite of these many challenges Sabrina was able to continue to drive the loyalty program forward. As a result, member activation increased 314% and All- Accor Live Limitless was recognized as a breakaway leader as the Best Loyalty Program in the USA for 2021 by Bond Loyalty Awards.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Sabrina, is a dedicated and passionate marketing professional. She works incredibly hard and never seeks the spotlight. She is a selfless leader who is always advocating for her team and their projects. It would be wonderful to see her recognized for her valuable contribution to the organization and the industry."

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#### Q&A with Sabrina Lillew

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##### What keeps you inspired?

I truly enjoy the work that I do, and the people that I get to do it with! I work with some of the best and brightest minds in the industry and they inspire me to do great things!

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

I would advise my younger self to take more risks. Don't let the fear of failing stop you from trying something new or making a change in your career path. You are your own worst critic and are capable of so much more than you may think. Believe in yourself.

### Yola Marshall

#### VICE PRESIDENT AMERICA SALES

IHG Hotels & Resorts



Yola Marshall was recently appointed to her new role as Vice President America Sales at IHG Hotels & Resorts, one of the world's leading hotel companies with more than 6,000 global properties. Prior to this role, Yola oversaw commercial sales performance as Vice President Commercial Sales supporting IHG US Franchise hotels.

A hospitality veteran with more than three decades of hotel operations, sales and marketing leadership, Yola joined IHG in 2008 as the Director of Sales and Marketing at the InterContinental Toronto Centre. Prior to assuming her current role, she served as Head of Franchise Performance, Director of Commercial Performance for Canada, and Regional Director for Corporate Managed Hotels in the U.S. and Canada.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

As hotels started to recover from the pandemic there was a clear need for additional sales and revenue support on property. After running a successful pilot that provided insight into how best support hotels, Yola and team created a service for hotels that focused on not just revenue management but on property sales and digital marketing support. Working with Revenue Management and Digital Marketing she helped with the creation of true Commercial Strategists.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"The passion and commitment that Yola brings to work everyday motivates those around her to drive business forward. She inspires team members to be at their best and is held in high regard with her peers."

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#### Q&A with Yola Marshall

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##### What keeps you inspired?

Uncovering data to identify opportunities. And, seeing growth of my team and helping them be successful!

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

Don't be afraid to make some moves and get out of your comfort zone. Be confident!

### Kevin McAteer

#### SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND SALES

Concord Hospitality



Kevin has been a key player in the hospitality industry for over 30 years. Currently he leads Concord's Sale and Marketing departments, prior to that he was with Marriott International in various leadership roles.

He's been a leader in our industry across a number of disciplines including property General Manager, Area GM, VP of Sales, and Senior VP of Sales and Marketing. He currently leads all top line commercial divisions (Sales, Revenue Mgmt, Digital Marketing) for Concord Hospitality. This includes responsibility for the sales leaders and efforts at over 150 hotels. It also includes leadership of Concord corporate regional sales VP's, Digital Marketing, and Revenue Management divisions. His hands-on experience gives him a rare understanding of the demands on both operations and sales leaders. His ability to bring them together toward a common goal is a text book example of the outcome being greater than the sum of it's parts.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Kevin expertly tapped into a key driver of ambitious sales leaders, competition. He set the table for over 200 sales leaders to unleash all the tools and experience at their disposal to drive revenue and close deals. This including enhancing sales and prospecting tool kits, championing a best in class Sales Development Program and creating an energetic atmosphere around are driving market share.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Kevin is a hands-on leader, he is also the most emotionally intelligent leader I've had the pleasure of working for. Kevin's ability coach and put people in a position to succeed is why the leaders under him have thrived and have such longevity with Concord. He has personally made me a better leader to my own team."

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#### Q&A with Kevin McAteer

##### What keeps you inspired?

Developing emerging Gen Z leaders who are thirsty to prove all the "experts" wrong. Too often I read or hear about how so many in this generation won't work hard or can't relate to the typical work environment. Every generation has had stress, anxiety, and choices. We have to give this generation a chance, and mentor these future leaders, while not being afraid to give candid feedback. They will prove some of us right, as they match a strong work ethic with an uncanny connection to technology to become some of the most impactful leaders of the future.

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

Build a Personal Board of Directors: When we are young and starting our career, we may get lucky to meet and work for someone we consider a true mentor. That likely will not be enough to get through all the first-time experiences we go through in our twenties, especially if have to navigate any real-life adversity. Having a wide range of purposely selected mentors that you trust and can unofficially appoint to your Personal Board of Directors can provide you with wisdom beyond your years to help you avoid pitfalls.



### Monika Morrobel, CHDM, CRME

#### SENIOR CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

Kessler Collection



Growing her career within the Kessler Collection and its group of inspiring properties, Monika has 19 years of experience in the hospitality industry. She worked in operational roles before finding her true calling in revenue management and commercial strategy. Currently serving as Sr. Corporate Director of Commercial Strategy, she has a passion for analyzing data and trends to create synergy between departments and improve company performance.

Always striving for learning and development, Monika takes an active role in the industry by serving on advisory boards for HSMAI and Marriott and earning CRME and CHDM certification. She seeks to bring value through her partnerships and efforts to help continue to bring the industry forward.

Monika currently resides in Orlando with her husband, two daughters and cat Hopper Fritz Catwalker.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Monika has directed a holistic strategy that has allowed the group and BT segments to find a place for the sake of future needs while optimizing the high-rated leisure demands that otherwise threaten those two lower-rated segments to date. Monika has exceptional analytical skills. She defines the strategies amongst the team through analysis of trends varying from the obvious and less evident through models that create a variance to industry trends and forecasts to provide the science to the otherwise art of revenue management.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

“Monika has been vital to Kessler’s growth in creating analytics and studies and, most importantly, inspiring others through her passion for strategy. She is a respected and valued leader at Kessler and in our industry. She is called upon to collaborate on other areas of our company, including accounting, IT, and business development.”

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#### Q&A with Monika Morrobel

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##### What keeps you inspired?

Both ongoing learning and the people I work with. When you have those individuals on your team and in the industry who have stuck with you through thick and thin and continue to give their all, it is impossible to not keep striving every day to keep improving and achieve the results that we all have worked so hard for. Furthermore, I have been blessed with the most remarkable leader who inspires me daily. She leads by example and challenges me while being a partner and support system to keep pushing forward.

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

Don’t doubt yourself! The old adage is true of “the more you know, the more you realize you DON’T know,” but that should not hold you back. No one should be an expert in everything, and true value is not in knowledge itself but in the ability to think logically, see multiple perspectives and seek to learn. So, recognize the value you bring to the table now – your knowledge will continue to grow with time.

### Todd O'Leary

#### VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Sonoma County Tourism



Todd O'Leary is a 25-year veteran of the travel and tourism industry. An up-through-the-ranks DMO professional, Todd started his career at VISIT Milwaukee in 1998, working his way up from a PR intern to Director of Marketing. In 2013 he joined San Francisco Travel as VP of Global Partnerships and Strategic Alliances. Since 2018, he has served as the VP of Marketing & Communications at Sonoma County Tourism.

Todd is actively involved in the tourism industry, including committee roles at Destinations International, Visit California, and CalTravel. He has also earned two industry certifications – the Certified Travel Industry Specialist (CTIS) from the American Bus Association; and the highest DMO certification – the Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) from Destinations International.

Todd and his husband Mark love to travel the world, experiencing destinations through the local food and craft beverage scene. They live in Sonoma County, California.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

The last campaign he led – a creative spring campaign promotion mental wellbeing and intentional travel – exceeded that high water mark, generating an unprecedented \$262:1 ROI. Our research partner, Longwoods International indicated that they believed this was the highest return of any program they had ever measured.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

“Todd O'Leary has a hospitality heart – and an extraordinary mind that separates him from the pack. He is a vocal LGBTQ advocate, a leader in sustainable tourism, an industry coach and frequent mentor, and a formidable champion who strengthens every member of his team.”

#### Q&A with Todd O'Leary

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#### What keeps you inspired?

For me, it's really twofold. First – as a DMO professional, the communities I serve are rife with inspiration, especially the people who create experiences that our visitors partake in. Secondly, my team provides daily inspiration. The way they channel their love of our destination to seize on opportunities and push the envelope to further our reach is something I cherish.

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

You never know where life is going to take you. Be open to the possibilities and seize on them as they present themselves. This industry is full of opportunities. Have fun and enjoy the ride!

### Edelyn Parker-Frye

**DIRECTOR OF BRAND EVENTS  
COMMUNICATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS**  
Red Roof



Edelyn Parker-Frye is a 17-year veteran of the marketing industry, and she is an expert in managing events and communication programs and developing and nurturing partnerships. A member of Meeting Professionals International with a background in theatre, her experience has been put to work in every aspect of her responsibilities. She positively impacts and enhances experiences internally for our team members and franchisees, as well as externally for our customers and communities.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Edelyn's passion for giving and "doing good" has been put to work for Red Roof. She has spearheaded Red Roof's Room in Your Heart purpose program with dynamism and enthusiasm.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Edelyn is a star who is genuine, passionate, and giving. Every day she puts her skills to work to genuinely better Red Roof as well as the communities we serve. We are incredibly fortunate at Red Roof to benefit from her extraordinary mind, passion, smarts, and her perspective every day to enhance our employees, franchisees, customers, and communities."

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#### Q&A with Edelyn Parker-Frye

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##### What keeps you inspired?

I am inspired by the good I see in people. What's really cool is that inspiration applies to my work life and home life.

At work, I have the pleasure of being surrounded by people committed to delivering the best experience and value to all we serve— be that guests, franchisees, or fellow team members. Our work through Room in Your Heart highlights that same "good" by partnering Red Roof with impactful organizations and important missions. I always want to deliver successful Room in Your Heart promotions for our partners because of their inspiring work for their communities.

At home, I see the good in my husband, family, and friends every day. Their passion for their work and compassion for their communities inspire me to want to do better and do more.

I am fortunate to be surrounded by inspiring people doing good at every turn.

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

My younger self would have benefitted from the "don't sweat the small stuff" talk. To say little Edelyn was a perfectionist would be an understatement. I still have to remind myself of that occasionally, but I have certainly come a long way in that regard.



### Linda Parker Sanpei

#### FOUNDER & CEO

Parker Sanpei



Linda is the Founder and CEO of Parker Sanpei, a full-service PR and marketing agency focused on the hospitality and lifestyle industries. Linda thrives on developing innovative multiprong solutions that drive brand recognition and demand, be it for hospitality groups, destinations, resorts and hotels, restaurants, wineries, hospitality trade associations, attractions, or stand-alone brands. Her expertise in curating unique strategies has enabled her clients to thrive beyond their initial goals. Parker Sanpei's trusted relationships with a broad network of A-list media and influencers provide a platform to share original ideas, trends, and experiences that evolve into original stories and promotions that connect clients to their audiences.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Linda obtained a USDA Value Added Producers Matching Fund Grant in the amount of \$500K to promote Paso Robles CABs in the state of Texas, the second biggest consuming state of Cabernet Sauvignon. Over an 18-month period, winery visitation and sales of member wineries have grown by double digits. Per the USDA grant work plan, the estimated incremental return on investment is in excess of \$9M across the members of the Paso Robles CAB Collective.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"I have been impressed with Linda's ability to not only think out of the box in response to the marketing and communication needs of her clients, but also by her ability to look at long term needs and obstacles to be proactive for her clients."

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#### Q&A with Linda Parker Sanpei

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##### What keeps you inspired?

Seeking better ways to do all things that add value to others.

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

Surround yourself with people that inspire, challenge, and support you. Those whom you respect for their integrity, character, values, perseverance, and kindness; because one day you will find yourself modeling what you learned along the way.



### Brent Shiratori

#### VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL BRAND

Outrigger Resorts and Hotels



As vice president, global brand group at Outrigger Hospitality Group, Brent Shiratori champions Outrigger's brand strategy through creative development and content strategy for web, social, email and paid media, campaigns, communications programs, brand resources, including tools and systems, and oversight of the brand intranet environment and media asset management.

Brent founded Aidia, a branding and strategic marketing consultancy. He has previously served as management supervisor at Carol H Williams Advertising in Oakland and held positions at Laird Christianson Advertising, CP Advertising and Starr Seigle Advertising.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Brent's innovations in the way Outrigger's Global Brand department runs continue to minimize costs, while at the same time allowing for quickly scaling as the needs for the company change, aligning with Outrigger's rapid expansion plans in several new destinations in the next five years.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Brent is the epitome of a gracious and humble leader. He is beloved by his colleagues and a committed community steward. He stands tall in the face of any challenge thrown his way, puts his head down and gets to work. He's often one of the first to arrive in the office and last to leave – ensuring that his team has the support and resources that they need to succeed. He is without question, an extraordinary mind and deserving of this national marketing recognition."

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#### Q&A with Brent Shiratori

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##### What keeps you inspired?

Every single day, I get to find new ways to tell engaging brand stories about our amazing properties around the world. Every day, there is a new impossible challenge that our team will find a way to overcome. Each morning, I wake up looking forward to seeing the things we will create to make Outrigger the Premier Beach Resort Company in the World.

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

To be successful in life, you have to "love" what you do. You're definitely not going to "like" everything you do. But you do have to "love" it.

So when you're young, you should try to do as many things as possible to figure out what really drives you. Something that you'll look forward to when you wake up in the morning. We spend at least a third of our adult life working. And life's too short to spend that much of it on something you don't love doing.

### Stephanie Smith

**CHDM – CEO & DIGITAL MATRIARCH**

Cogwheel Marketing



Stephanie Sparks Smith is CEO and Digital Matriarch at Cogwheel Marketing™ and partner and consultant at Cayuga Hospitality Consultants. Her recent passion includes developing Cogwheel Analytics; a hotel digital marketing reporting and BI tool that aggregates data from multiple sources to allow companies to identify trends and opportunities in their online presence. She is engaged on the HSMAI Marketing Advisory Board Member where she has led committees around DEI, Rising Leaders plus has her CHDM certification. Stephanie is a regular on the speaking network at many hospitality events and conferences highlighted here. Stephanie has an undergraduate degree in Hospitality Tourism Management from Virginia Tech and an MBA from University of Texas at Dallas plus has an Advanced Revenue Management Certificate from Cornell. Stephanie has lived all over the US, including Virginia, Colorado, Texas, Washington, Florida and Massachusetts.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

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Stephanie built Cogwheel Analytics: a new marketing BI tool and reporting platform for branded hotels. While many technologies pull stay data from the PMS, this platform pulls booked data to allow hotels to analyze their campaigns and website performance. It aggregates digital marketing data from many sources to streamline analysis and reporting for hotels, owners and management companies.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

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“Stephanie is a brilliant hospitality digital marketer and my first-choice, go-to resource for advice, guidance and recommendations on any digital marketing topic. I’ve been around the industry for over 20 years, and Stephanie never ceases to teach me something new.”

#### Q&A with Stephanie Smith

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#### What keeps you inspired?

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The next challenge and breaking the next glass ceiling.

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

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Be patient, become more self-aware, and always be learning!

### Joe Spirito

#### VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL DIGITAL & MARKETING OPERATIONS

Preferred Travel Group



Joe Spirito serves as Vice President of Global Digital and Marketing Operations for Preferred Travel Group, responsible for the development and execution of the global web, digital, and ecommerce strategy for its independent hotel brand, Preferred Hotels & Resorts, and overseeing digital marketing opportunities for its travel and hospitality consulting company, PTG Consulting, which include website and digital marketing reviews and assessment, and the development of comprehensive ecommerce strategy.

Since joining the company in 2019 as Director of Global Digital Marketing, Joe has played an instrumental role in optimizing Preferred Hotels & Resort's digital marketing efforts such as revamping the brand's paid media program to strengthen the performance of campaigns through The Marketplace (the brand's collective marketing program for its member hotels) and overhauling its brand website, PreferredHotels.com.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Joe's recent efforts have been fruitful: Responsible for the recent development and execution of Global Web Strategy for all product lines and web domains, leading ongoing UX improvements on PreferredHotels.com – these efforts resulted in conversion rate improvement of 65%.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Joe's incredibly knowledgeable in his space, and never ceases to amaze us with his 'out of the box' yet feasible ideas to increase revenue. Joe is a true leader, and is one of the most inspirational hoteliers I've had the pleasure of working with."

#### Q&A with Joe Spirito

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#### What keeps you inspired?

Seeing both current and former members of my team continue to advance and grow in their careers.

Also seeing the results of our hard work come to fruition, which is why it's important to set ways to measure success early on. Even small improvements should be celebrated and will help drive more innovation.

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

Remember to take a moment to pause and celebrate success along the way, it will make the journey much more enjoyable.



### Gillian Ware, CMP

**NATIONAL SALES DIRECTOR**  
San Diego Tourism Authority



Gillian Ware, CMP is a National Sales Director in the Hotel Meetings Sales Department with the San Diego Tourism Authority. She has been with the DMO for over 15 years and handles the Pacific Northwest, Western Canada, Sacramento, and Multicultural markets nationally.

Coming from an operational background and growing into sales, her career experiences span from selecting service properties to resort and convention hotels in the US and abroad. A 38-year veteran of the hospitality industry, in her current position, Gillian acts as a destination expert and liaison between meeting planners and local hotels, restaurants, attractions, and venues to help find the ideal location for each program while offering the best possible experience for participants.

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#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENT:

Gillian's superpower is bringing people together and making everyone feel included. She is a visionary, a leader and continues to help lead San Diego Tourism Authorities Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts. Her advocacy work is all above and beyond her role as a National Sales Director in which she achieved 5 in Fiscal Year 2022.

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#### WHAT INSPIRED THIS NOMINATION?

"Gillian is a mentor, a role model and is passionate about inspiring the next generation of hospitality professionals. When you have the ability to connect with Gillian, she makes you feel like you are the most important person in the room. She is the epitome of a hospitality professional, and one that I hope to emulate throughout my career."

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#### Q&A with Gillian Ware

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##### What keeps you inspired?

Helping to plan event experiences in San Diego for a variety of organizations and clients. Successfully bringing programs to our city to keep our tourism industry thriving! Every day is a new day!

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

Get involved, invest and network, network, network!



### 2023 HSMAI ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

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HOTELS & RESORTS

Marriott  
INTERNATIONAL

#### EMERALD

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### ABOUT HSMAI



The Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) is the hospitality industry's leading advocate for intelligent, sustainable hotel revenue growth. HSMAI provides hotel professionals and their partners with tools, insights, and expertise to fuel sales, inspire marketing, and optimize revenue through programs such as HSMAI's Revenue Optimization Conference, Marketing Strategy Conference, Sales Leader Forum, and Adrian Awards. HSMAI offers organizational and individual membership, with more than 7,000 members in four global regions — the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. — [hsm.ai](https://hsm.ai)