

HSMAI TOP 25

Extraordinary Minds in Hospitality Sales, Marketing, and Revenue Optimization

**Learn more about our Top 25 honorees
in the words of the people who nominated them**



**CHRIS
ANDERSON**
Chief Commercial Officer
White Lodging

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I've seen him in action, challenging and motivating his team to push boundaries. You can't help but be inspired when you leave a meeting with Chris. He makes great things happen. And he himself will never settle.

— Deb Zindler, Fuel Hospitality

BIO

A marketer, futurist, trend hunter, and revenue developer, Anderson previously spent more than 16 years with Marriott, served as senior vice president of brand development for Marcus Hotels and Resorts, and is the author of *I'm Not Buying It: How to Turn Today's Skeptical Millennials Into Loyal Customers*. At White Lodging he has repositioned the company's brand and internal culture with an emphasis on talent acquisition and retention.

Finding Inspiration

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When I travel, I always choose interesting hotels to stay at that always stay in your own hotels, you tend to be in audit mode and not ideation mode. Besides studying actual humans interacting in hotels, I spend a lot of my time studying reports and metadata that identifies trends in consumer buying behavior. What we buy, when we buy, and how we choose to buy are all changing rapidly.

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Krista is incredibly passionate and dedicated to her team and partners, but often stays behind the scenes. Given the opportunities for growth and the strategic importance of our partnership with Brand USA to the Expedia Media Solutions business as well as to Expedia Inc., we think Krista’s role in building such a successful relationship deserves to be recognized. Krista is also a role model on the team — known for her strategic, thoughtful, and calm approach.

— Hari Nair, Expedia

BIO

Thanks to Bentley, who manages strategic partnerships with advertisers in North America, Expedia was a founding partner of Brand USA, the destination-marketing organization for the United States. She played a key role in securing Expedia as the first global sponsor and exclusive online travel activation partner of the Brand USA IMAX film National Parks Adventure, and helped promote the film by leading the development of “What U.S. National Park Are You?” — a custom digital campaign that generated nearly 64 million impressions.

Finding Inspiration

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This may sound very basic, but I find inspiration for innovation in hospitality every time I travel for business, leisure, or ‘bleisure.’ I travel frequently, so I appreciate personalization that saves me time, makes me feel special, and helps me discover new experiences. One of the great things about working at Expedia is that I research and book all my own travel on our sites. We are then encouraged to send feedback to the company on that process. If you get into that mindset of collecting feedback in the travel moment, you really start to think about how companies could innovate to make travel more enjoyable.

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KRISTA BENTLEY

Strategic Accounts Director
Expedia Media Solutions



MICHAEL CADY

Vice President of Marketing
Charlestowne Hotels



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In order to effectively lead, you must demonstrate that your approach is worth following. What Michael Cady excels in — and why he is deserving of this nomination — is leading a team to enjoy both individual and collective successes that further drive the prosperity of the overall company.

— Michael Tall, Charlestowne Hotels

BIO

Upon joining Charlestowne Hotels in March 2016, Cady inherited a skilled but fragmented team of seven professionals who were responsible for managing and executing the marketing services for more than 40 independent hotels. Cady transformed the marketing department, blending expertise in digital marketing, advertising, ecommerce, and creative development to provide clients with a truly bespoke and collaborative product, and helping Charlestowne’s properties achieve a 35-percent increase in revenue and a 25-percent increase in reservations.

Finding Inspiration

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I’ve found that in hospitality, it’s not so much about finding inspiration as it is observing it. At its core, hospitality will always be about people. To understand hospitality is to understand the difference between something happening to you and something happening for you; the distinction between those two simple, one-syllable prepositions alludes to the human connection required for hospitality to be present.

Human nature will not yield to cultural and societal trends, but through careful observation of human nature, we can learn to influence human behavior.

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He is responsible for leading a team that has a keen understanding of hotelier requirements and pressure points. In turn this unfailing commitment to working as a partner has enabled both their clients and OTA Insight to deliver continued growth since its launch.

— Andy Tam, OTA Insight

BIO

Coppens co-founded OTA Insight 2012, and since then the business has grown from a small disrupter challenging an established marketplace to a business supporting more than 16,000 clients in 134 countries. In the last 18 months he has been responsible for the strategic management, development, and launch of two new tools, Revenue Insight and Market Insight — both a first for the market, allowing hoteliers access to greater functionality and insight than ever before.

Finding Inspiration

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Much of my own inspiration for creativity and innovation in hospitality and travel is driven by my interest in and commitment to helping hoteliers deal with the increasing complexity the industry faces. From development in metasearch, new OTAs, and business models, to modifications in pricing models and member-only rates, such rapid changes can be confusing and difficult to manage for hoteliers and industry partners alike. As a result, I feel inspired and compelled to simplify these changes and help hoteliers navigate their way by developing best-in-class solutions which can simplify these growing data sources and market opportunities. It is our ambition that hoteliers and revenue managers in turn reap the benefits of our innovation and creativity by saving time and staying ahead of their market and competitive set.

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**ADRIAAN
COPPENS**
CEO
OTA Insight



KELLY DALTON

Director of Communications
Best Western Hotels & Resorts

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Kelly has been a change leader in our organization. She understands the role of being a marcomm leader and is able to bring her creativity to business units across the enterprise to drive communications engagement. This has resulted in dramatically improved readership on internal brand communications with our hoteliers and has allowed us to secure more high-profile earned media placements in our brand's history.

— Dorothy Dowling, Best Western Hotels & Resorts

BIO

When Best Western refreshed its Best Western Rewards (BWR) program in 2017, Dalton played an instrumental role in building consumer and industry awareness of the program's enhancements. She crafted a reveal of the new BWR during Best Western's 2017 Media Travel Summits in New York City, attended by 30 journalists, and in Toronto, attended by 22 journalists — the company's most successful summits ever. The BWR refresh launch ended up garnering 220 million impressions.

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I have been in the travel industry for more than 30 years and have rarely come across someone with such laser focus, desire, and marketing capability to move the needle!

— Jill Kidder, Louisiana Travel Promotion Association

BIO

Before stepping into his current role, Edmiston served as assistant secretary of the Louisiana Office of Tourism for six years, where he developed the wildly popular #OnlyLouisiana Ambassador Campaign while presiding over record numbers of visitors to Louisiana — from 24.3 million in 2012 to 46.8 million in 2016. He serves on the boards of directors of Brand USA, the Southeast Tourism Society, Travel South USA, and the U.S. Travel Association.

Finding Inspiration

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Having served on multiple national boards of directors, I am always inspired by what others in our industry are doing to drive visitation to their destinations. I in turn use that inspiration to drive me and my team to work even more diligently to be successful in also inspiring visitation to Louisiana.

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KYLE

EDMISTON

Chief Operating Officer

Lake Charles/Southern Louisiana
Convention & Visitors Bureau



**ELLIOTT
FERGUSON**
President and CEO
Destination DC

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Elliott is charismatic, approachable, and invested in his employees, tourism, and hospitality and Washington, D.C. He empowers his staff to be innovative and creative, and it pays off. He’s the kind of person that takes the time to get to know people on a personal level, from his employees to his colleagues and customers, despite being constantly on the road for business travel.

— Carol Motley, Destination DC

BIO

When Washington, D.C., welcomed the U.S. Travel Association’s IPW conference for the first time last June, Ferguson led the effort to show attendees an unexpected side of the city, from charming neighborhoods to Michelin-starred cuisine to an LGBTQ event co-hosted by New York City and San Francisco. The entire IPW conference delivered an immediate economic impact of \$12 million — plus an expected 1 million additional overseas visitors by 2020.

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Finding Inspiration

I’m inspired by the places I travel, the people I work with, and the people who live and work in D.C. and make the nation’s capital such an incredible destination for visitors. I’m also inspired by people outside of our industry. I look at how the brands behind successful products are marketing and how we can apply some of those tactics to what we do.

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We believe that Leon represents the best of the best in the NYC hospitality community. Those who work with Leon are inspired and encouraged by their interaction with him.

— Katharine Stapleton, HSMAI Greater New York

BIO

After beginning his career at the Westin St Francis in San Francisco, Goldberg held positions in Los Angeles and New York before becoming director of sales and marketing at the New York Marriott Marquis in 2007, increasing RevPAR from 112 to 121. When Marriott International acquired Starwood, he applied for — and won — the position of complex director of sales and marketing and now oversees both the Marriott Marquis and the Sheraton New York Times Square, New York City’s second- and third-largest hotels.

Finding Inspiration

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I still believe that true hospitality starts with the basics — and to have an impact in this great industry, the inspiration begins with an inherent spirit to serve. That includes the people you work with, work for, and your guests. Indeed, we all can ‘feel’ genuine hospitality, from when you arrive at the entrance of a hotel, with that first ‘Welcome back, Mr. Goldberg, and thank you for staying with us,’ to the handwritten and personalized note in your guest room. All of this makes you feel appreciated and special. So while the inspiration comes from the basic human interaction, the new technologies that surround CRM systems, populating guest reservations with information that recognizes guests at a personal level, inspire us to use these innovations in a creative way.

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**LEON
GOLDBERG**
Complex Director of
Sales and Marketing
New York Marriott Marquis and
Sheraton New York Times Square



**TERRI
HAACK**
President
Terranea Resort

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In addition to creating and ensuring memorable moments for the hundreds of guests that visit Terranea Resort each day, Haack inspires and motivates the more than 1,250 associates employed at the resort through her innovative and extraordinary leadership. Her personal philosophy is to create an environment that gives employees a sense of personal value, and she is genuine in her relationships. She is a natural leader who remains community-minded with a heart of service, and continues to lead the Terranea team on the path to becoming an iconic and unparalleled destination resort.

— Jessie Burns, Terranea Resort



BIO

Haack's career spans more than 35 years in hotels and resort-operations management, with nearly two decades specializing in resort-community development, operations, and real estate. During her 10 years as president of Terranea Resort, she has grown the 102-acre property into one of America's top-rated luxury resort destinations — from spearheading pre-construction operations in 2007 to managing a recent \$8-million enhancement program.

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Finding Inspiration

It is important to draw from the close connection of our guests and associates, but also step away from the business to gain a new perspective. I consider myself a lifelong learner and explorer. My curiosity is fueled from what I am seeing in the hotel space, airline industry, transportation, and like-minded service providers and brands.

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I have had the pleasure of working with a number of very bright and talented individuals, but none bring the energy, passion, and vision to every project as Katie does. Pure and simple, Katie is the role model of what we all want our leaders to be.

— Christopher Kenney, Two Roads Hospitality

BIO

Part of the industry for 13 years, Johnson started out as sales and marketing coordinator for Destination Hotels & Resorts. Two years ago she joined Two Roads Hospitality, where she led the development and execution of the Brand Summer campaign, helping Two Roads increase market share with 4.6-percent RevPAR index growth. Because of her skills and ability to drive results, Johnson was asked to join Two Roads' home-office team in a marketing leadership role.

Finding Inspiration

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It starts with my personal passion for travel and self-discovery. Similar to the reasons why our guests love to travel, I love to visit new places, enrich in history and culture, and meet new people. I also find great pleasure in building independent lifestyle brands within the destination portfolio. Each of our hotels have their own unique identity and offer different experiences to our guests. I love helping define those differentiating touchpoints and creating memories for our guests.



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**KATIE
JOHNSON**
Senior Director of
Branding and Marketing
Two Roads Hospitality



CHRISTINE LAWSON

Senior Vice President,
Loews Sales Organization
Loews Hotels



As a visionary leader who inspires people, Christine drove significant organizational change while thinking about the business from the big-picture perspective, yet never forgetting how powerful forging and nurturing individual relationships can be. Her uncompromising commitment to integrity and a desire to contribute positively to a greater good enhance Christine's credibility, building trust and engagement among those she leads.

— Monica Xuereb, Loews Hotels



BIO

Hired to bring a fractured and siloed sales operation together, Lawson has driven significant organizational change. As a result, the Loews Sales Organization enjoyed 0.5-percent share growth through June 2017 and an increase of 3.6 percent in RevPAR for Same Store hotels in a difficult year for the industry.

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Robert seems to always be thinking and analyzing as he moves throughout his busy days. He's most definitely academic in his approach to problem solving, but he also has the grit to ensure proper implementation of strategies and tactics.

— Christopher Kenney, Two Roads Hospitality

BIO

Recently promoted from director of hotel yield and distribution, Levine has been instrumental in growing Seminole's gaming profits to record levels — from \$1.1 billion in 2007 to approximately \$2.3 billion in 2016. Levine has advanced degrees in finance, and teaches revenue management at Florida International University.

Finding Inspiration

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Top performers in the retail and ecommerce space are focused on innovation and have built 'test and learn' cultures that focus on customer engagement and happiness. The processes that come from these channels can be applied in the hospitality industry. Finding ways to add or modify these concepts into our industry keeps me on the hunt for ways to improve our business.

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ROBERT LEVINE

Vice President of Hotel
Revenue Optimization and
Customer Care
Seminole Gaming



SARAH BEAM LUKAS

Director of RitzCarlton.com
The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company

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Her team is uniquely rallied around the ‘true north’ of objectives Sarah has established, and engaged with doing the work smarter and better each time. She encourages a culture of challenging the status quo, embracing risk, and not being afraid to fail. Sarah’s drive for the best and enthusiasm are contagious and inspire her team to bring their best every day.

— Kyle Murdoch, Marriott International

BIO

In the last 18 months, Lukas has completely reinvented Ritz-Carlton’s digital ecosystem, developing a nimble organization to innovate the digital guest experience and pilot new platforms. She oversaw a platform overhaul that included modernizing the design and migrating to a fully responsive site in eight languages — all with a new brand voice and personalization capabilities that established RitzCarlton.com as the cornerstone of the brand’s digital strategy.

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Although Kerry has helped Highgate accomplish many great achievements, the reason our chapter has nominated her is because of her overall impact on the field of revenue management. She is well respected in industry organizations, teaches students, hires only those dedicated to revenue management, and continues to push the boundaries of what our industry should be focusing on.

— Katharine Stapleton, HSMAI Greater New York

BIO

Mack has more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry — 17 of them with Highgate, where she has concentrated on pushing revenue management beyond pricing by implementing ecommerce initiatives throughout the company’s hotels and its presence as a leading independent operator. As a direct result of her efforts, Highgate has developed a name for itself as a company with a focus on revenue management.

Finding Inspiration

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The hotel industry is filled with professionals that are inspired by travel, energized by meeting new people, and excited by the endless possibilities of the next adventure. When you love what you do, ideas and innovation are a natural byproduct.

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**KERRY
MACK**

**Executive Vice President of
Revenue Management
and Distribution
Highgate**



CHRIS NIXON

Associate Vice President of
Revenue Optimization
Ashford

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Chris is humble, brilliant, and unique all at the same time. Chris is the most talented person I have ever had work for me. Chris will be executive committee at a large company. It's not a matter of if, but rather when and where.

— Sloan Dean, Ashford



BIO

In 2016, Nixon took over day-to-day leadership of all property-level sales, marketing, and revenue-management strategies across 130 hotels. As a result, Ashford grew RevPAR for a third straight year. Nixon also implemented new ROI analysis that allowed Ashford to justify a seven-figure increase in ecommerce spending — and outperform its REIT peers in RevPAR growth.

Finding Inspiration

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I believe Creativity and innovation drive success. I find inspiration for this by thinking about an individual asset. I think about all the line-level employees — the front-desk agents, the housekeepers, the servers — that utilize the hotel to provide for their families. Then I magnify that impact across our portfolio. When you think about it like that, your success or failure has a profound impact on others and you have no choice but to be successful. This motivates me to continue to innovate and find creative solutions for the problems we face.

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Joelle is a natural leader, charismatic, a deep strategic thinker, and above all she puts her team and the enterprise first and makes sure that her focus is on team balance and work-life. She is the perfect poster example of how you can be both a good team leader, great thinker/marketer, and have a family life all in balance.

— Christian Kuhn, Hilton

BIO

When Hilton combined its three all-suite brands — Embassy Suites, Homewood Suites, and Home2 Suites — into one product-marketing division, Park was hand-picked to manage the multimillion-dollar marketing and PR campaigns. Bringing together a diverse and talented group of traditional, online, social, and PR teams, she designed a comprehensive three-year strategy that has resulted in 500 million impressions and a 2-percent increase in overall brand awareness.

Finding Inspiration

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I am constantly inspired by my personal travel experiences, whether with my family, my girlfriends, or even in the midst of business travel. There are brands, products, and services that enhance my travel experience by anticipating my needs and desires, sometimes even before I do. Also, living in D.C., there are so many incredible keynote speakers and musical artists who share new perspectives that inspire me to push creative boundaries.

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**JOELLE
PARK**

**Senior Director of
All Suites Marketing
Hilton**



TAMMY PETER

Vice President of
Distribution and
Connectivity Strategy
Wyndham Hotel Group



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Tammy is one of the best leaders within the industry and Wyndham. She leads by example and is an exceptional coach. A measure of her influence is how many of her team move on and get promoted to leading positions within Wyndham and other partners.

— Barry Goldstein, Wyndham Hotel Group

BIO

With more than 25 years in hospitality, Peter is an industry leader in hotel-distribution systems, with a specialty in overall connectivity strategy. At Wyndham, she has grown intermediary sales by more than 100 percent during the last 18 months while lowering the cost of sales, and also built a distribution strategy to connect global sales accounts as well as wholesale and tour and travel exceeding \$100 million in incremental revenue.

Finding Inspiration

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Look around you! Innovation begets innovation. Original, inspired ideas are being presented every day, and the creative use of the latest technology is enabling new business models at a faster pace than ever before. It's time to get on board. We can't look down or look back — we need to look ahead and derive creativity and inspiration from those around us who are already testing new concepts. Progressive competition will drive visionaries to test their theories and will ultimately drive more innovation. We need to use competition as the stimulus to be bold — to push ourselves higher and make our businesses stronger.

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It's been a pleasure discussing digital sales and marketing with Tim over the past year. He is an incredibly thoughtful individual and rightfully belongs on the Top 25 list.

— Nils Korsvoll, Nordic Choice Hotels

BIO

Peter is an award-winning B2C and B2B ecommerce executive and digital-marketing leader with 20 years of experience in financial services, retail, hospitality, and entertainment/media. Before launching Tim Peter & Associates — a full-service ecommerce and internet-marketing consulting firm — in 2011, he ran ecommerce and distribution strategy for a major luxury travel company.

Finding Inspiration

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An inspirational mentor told me years ago that you'll never go wrong listening to your customers. Customers continually tell us with both words and actions what they need if we pay close enough attention and seek to get to the root of their concerns. How can we make their experience better? How can we ease their journey?

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**TIM
PETER**
President
Tim Peter & Associates



MARIANA MECHOSO SAFER

Senior Vice President
of Client Success
HEBS Digital

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I have nominated Mariana in recognition of all that she has accomplished for Hotel360 Technologies, and her commitment to helping the hospitality industry improve their digital footprint. Mariana is a thought leader in our industry, a published author of groundbreaking articles and white papers, and a sought-after event speaker in the hospitality industry.

— Max Starkov, HEBS Digital



BIO

During her 12 years at HEBS Digital, Safer has done everything from working directly with hoteliers, to promoting B2B marketing initiatives, to opening an office in Las Vegas from the ground up — finding office space, interviewing talent, and training and managing team members. Within the last year, Mariana faced the challenge of needing to launch a new company and brand, Hotel360 Technologies, and led the charge, creating and promoting an online presence that included a logo, brand guidelines, collateral, sales kits, and the website itself.

Finding Inspiration

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Often in hospitality we are working with really tight budgets and not enough time to execute — and I find that can inspire creativity and also stifle it at the same time. That's why I do like to look outside the industry at other brands — in retail, fashion, and more. I also really enjoy talking to hoteliers from all walks of life — from independents, major brands, casinos — and actively find time to do this constantly. I love everything about hotels: how they provide a home away from home, are an escape from the everyday, and stand for travel and adventure. Talking and collaborating with others in our industry makes me feel like I'm not really working, just following my dream.

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Tim is an outstanding leader who elevated Cendyn to new heights, inspiring his staff to innovate and excel with a steady, focused style and ability to adapt. While the market flooded with competitors, Tim continued to bring in win after win for Cendyn, while ensuring the company maintained its unique identify.

BIO

— Michael Bennett, Cendyn

Sullivan has played a key role in transforming Cendyn into a cloud-based software and services company that's revolutionizing the hospitality industry. Under his leadership, Cendyn's revenue grew by more than 40 percent — while he also took on a multimillion-dollar investment from Accel-KKR, spearheaded the acquisition of Guestfolio, and realigned Cendyn One and Cendyn Events into one company.

Finding Inspiration

“ “ Being an avid traveler for both business and pleasure, I find an abundance of inspiration during the travel journey. Inspiration can come from an interaction that is just right or delivered in an elegant way through technology or human interaction. It can also come from the delays, frustrations, and missed opportunities that commonly arise during any trip. When I am traveling I am constantly asking, how can we leverage technology to better enable the magic moments at scale? I also spend a lot of time meeting with and listening to our customers and partners. These relationships and conversations are a constant source of inspiration. Talking with and collaborating with the people on the front lines is the best way to gain a deep understanding of the business challenges they face and how we can help solve them with innovative products and services.

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**TIM
SULLIVAN**
Chief Sales
and Marketing Officer
Cendyn



**JENNY
THOMASSIAN**
Head of Industry, Travel
Google

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Jenny is a true marketing innovator. She consistently amazes me by her ability to think outside the box. She solves her marketing partners' objectives by creating new ways of doing business.

— Max Starkov, HEBS Digital



BIO

With more than 15 years of sales and marketing experience in the internet and travel industries, including at Amazon and Travelocity, Thomassian last year brokered a DSP deal with Caesars valued at more than \$8 million per year. She worked with the CMO of Caesars to oversee the creation of a white-glove service model that enabled Caesars to beat its KPIs and resulted in 110-percent year-over-year growth in display advertising.

Finding Inspiration

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I am most inspired when I am traveling and can truly put myself in the shoes of the traveler. Experiencing our travel partners' products at every stage generates new ideas to better connect with guests and make their experiences even better.

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I just see the drive and passion and the dedication of this person — being a mother, spouse, and an executive overseeing one of the company’s biggest projects.

— Tony Yousfi, MGM Resorts

BIO

Over the past 12 months and into the next 12 months, Voss faces the challenge of helping turn the three-star Monte Carlo hotel into the \$550-million Park MGM — a four-diamond, four-star luxury resort. As part of that, she is responsible for building a new sales, service, and catering team and designing new meeting space.

Finding Inspiration

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Some of the best ideas or innovation have stemmed from collaborating with industries outside of hospitality. I have many mentors in other industries to bounce ideas or opportunities with that have given me some of the best guidance to look at things differently. A different lens can develop or spark an alternate view that I would not think of. While we all try to be the best in our craft, keeping an open mind and evolving as our customer behavior changes allows us to keep moving forward as well as provide the best service for our customers. If you fall into a rut of complacency, you will become extinct.

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**AMANDA
VOSS**

**Vice President of Sales
for Park MGM
MGM Resorts**



**DAN
WACKSMAN**
Senior Vice President of
Marketing and Distribution
Outrigger Hotels and Resorts

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Having worked with Dan for over 10 years, I appreciated his approach and leadership, his willingness to work with the various disciplines, and ability to make change happen within Outrigger. In my opinion, Dan stands out amongst his peers.

— Elizabeth Cambra, StrategicRev



BIO

Wacksmann has been part of the hospitality industry for more than 20 years, with the last 10 at Outrigger. In the last 18 months, he has overseen several significant projects, including launching a successful new website, implementing a loyalty program in partnership with the Global Hotel Alliance, and growing Outrigger’s social footprint to more than 600,000. He teaches an executive education class on digital marketing at the University of Hawaii’s School of Travel Industry Management.

Finding Inspiration

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It all stems from being curious — curious about your guests, curious about your hosts, curious about your competition, curious about the industry disruptors, curious about other industries, curious about data, and so on. This curiosity often leads you to see things that inspire you to creativity, whether it be a take on something someone is already doing, connecting a series of unrelated dots to come up with something different, or the jumping-off point to create something new.

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“I am nominating Kurt not only for his achievements and contributions to the travel marketing industry, but because he personally inspires me to do my best work — because he holds himself to that same standard. Kurt challenges our Property Solutions team to think big and dream bigger. In a time of do more with less, Kurt rallies our team to ensure we understand that every contribution, regardless of how small it may seem, has incredible value and reminds us that he is with us, every step of the way.

— Amy Devlaliwalla, Sojern

BIO

When Weinsheimer realized that Sojern’s engine for marketers could be tweaked to serve the distribution market, it resulted in the creation of the Property Solutions group, which is charged with driving online bookings directly to hotels worldwide. The new team has added more than 30 percent to Sojern’s financials in only its second full year of operation, opened six global offices, and in the last year alone added more than 40 employees and two core products.

Finding Inspiration

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I think that all inspiration for me has to come from my customers — travelers and hoteliers. If you don’t start by creating something that solves a pain point or enhances an experience, then you will build an innovation nobody wants. So when I am traveling, I grab coffee or a drink with GMs, revenue managers, and marketing leads to understand their demand-generation wants and needs. Then the ideas go from there.

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KURT WEINSHEIMER
Senior Vice President of Property Solutions
Sojern



ERNEST WOODEN

President and CEO
Los Angeles Convention
& Tourism Board

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He has world-class vision when it comes to expanding markets, and has used his numerous skills to successfully brand, market, and develop global relationships, both personally and professionally. He has a unique understanding of the international landscape, and he has made excellent decisions that have helped him to achieve goals and change the way work is done in many areas.

— John Mellon, Misericordia University



BIO

Wooden started his career in the food-and-beverage department at a Sheraton hotel and within several years was became vice president and general manager of the property. Formerly the executive vice president of global brands for Hilton Hotels, he arrived at the L.A. Convention & Tourism Board in 2014 with a goal of the city attracting 50 million visitors by 2020 — a number it will actually hit sometime in 2018.

Finding Inspiration

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“ For decades, I’ve started my day at 4 or 5 a.m. every morning reading a variety of publications for articles about a broad spectrum of industries, both domestically and abroad. I aspire to be a polymath — someone whose knowledge spans a significant number of different subject areas — and spend my time plugged into a variety of different, real-world subject matters looking for ways to apply them to the future world of tourism. I always ask myself: ‘At what point will Subject A intersect with travel and tourism, and how do we apply and exploit these growing ideas from other industries?’ ”