



Boston University School of Hospitality Administration

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INSIDE A REBRAND

KIM GIGUERE-LAPINE HELPED SMITH & WOLLENSKY KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES—WITHOUT LOSING ITS LEGACY

BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

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From the Dean



Dear SHA Family,

One of the consistent themes of *Check In* is change, and particularly change within the hospitality industry. In this issue, we consider how discrete hospitality institutions market themselves in response to—and because of—the larger trend of change.

The way we function as consumers has shifted, and correspondingly, what we want out of life and out of hospitality is dramatically different. In the not-so-distant past, new restaurants opened amid great fanfare and excitement (and still do); existing restaurants would, in response, go through a brand refresh to try to compete with these new establishments, which often resembled them at least structurally.

But now, the competitive landscape includes unfamiliar entities that don't look anything like the existing restaurants. Instead, they take the form of the expansive eat-in section of Wegmans supermarket, for example; or they turn the food court model on its head and transform into Eataly, a huge, gourmet Italian marketplace. How do we contextualize these new institutions that buck tradition, and moreover, how do rivals rebrand themselves as viable competitors?

Innovators in the industry are trying to create concepts and projects that offer the types of novel, convenient experiences that consumers crave. One fabulous example is The Lot in La Jolla, San Diego. Behind the façade of a bustling, upscale, casual restaurant is an eight-screen cinema. Its founder, Adolfo Fastlicht ('89), says he is in the business of "lifestyle entertainment," illustrating that, sometimes, hospitality isn't just about what the consumer enters for, but also what they find inside to address and fulfill all of their needs. (Read more about Fastlicht and The Lot on page 8.)

The task of rebranding to remain a viable competitor in the current industry landscape is infinitely complex. In our cover story (page 4), respected hospitality brand managers share their stories and help us to understand how best to reinvigorate a brand. I hope you find this useful and informative.

Best wishes,

Arun Upneja

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Join the **SHA** online community. Post, tag, tweet, ask questions, and reconnect with alumni and faculty.



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Assistant Professor Tarik Dogru suggests hotels reward guests for eco-friendly actions.

HELP YOUR GUESTS GO GREEN

HUGE KITCHENS. POOLS AND HOT TUBS. FRESH LINENS. VENDING MACHINES AND WELCOMING LIGHTING. Hotels' energy costs make up as much as 6 percent of their operating expenses and their energy use accounts for 1 percent of carbon emissions worldwide. To reduce their toll on the environment, hoteliers are adjusting many everyday practices—switching to energy-efficient lightbulbs, sourcing local produce, and investing in climate bonds. But what if guests luxuriate in steamy showers, leave lights on all day, or grab a fresh towel every time they dry their hands?

"If you're staying in a hotel, you're paying \$200 a night regardless" of how few towels you use, says Tarik Dogru, SHA's new assistant professor of hospitality finance and accounting. "People want to enjoy their stay; they don't want to think about these issues while on vacation or a business trip." To offset the potential inconvenience of going green, Dogru recommends incentivizing. For example, offer a guest who reuses towels a 10 percent discount on the next night's stay. Rewarding guests for participating in energy-efficient practices "will in turn make them seek out such hotels."—LARA EHRLICH

CONOR DOHERTY

GETTY IMAGES; GABRIELLE GUARRACINO



Irma Mann (center) joined faculty and staff to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the SHA building.

10 YEARS ON COMM AVE

In 2006, SHA moved from BU's Metropolitan College to its own building—a 26,124-square-foot space designed to feel like a luxury hotel. In the decade since moving to 928 Commonwealth Avenue, SHA has added intimate student lounges and seminar rooms, high-tech auditoriums, a state-of-the-art boardroom, and a career resource center that offers one-on-one coaching. "Having our own building has been critical to the success of SHA," says Dean Arun Upneja. "Since the entire building is devoted to the School, the hospitality industry identifies SHA as an independent entity within the BU brand, which helps create pathways for industry leaders to interact with the students and faculty."

In June 2016, SHA celebrated the anniversary of its move with Irma Mann, president of IRMA, Inc., who was president of the Dean's Advisory Board at the time of the building's construction. During the celebratory tour of 928, Upneja showed Mann recent upgrades designed to increase the versatility of the classrooms, from webcams to desks that swivel and snap together to encourage student collaboration.

"This building inspires students to collaborate with their peers," says Upneja. "The ability to customize our space means that we can provide specialized instruction and resources to our students. For example, we are able to remotely invite leaders and guest speakers to any of our classrooms by using Skype, offer students high-tech strategies for innovation and collaboration, and improve the overall quality of the education we bring to our students."

GRADUATE PROGRAM ANNOUNCED

IN SUMMER 2017, SHA will welcome its inaugural class of master's students. The School's newly launched Master of Management in Hospitality is designed for those with liberal arts or business backgrounds who are ready to switch to a hospitality leadership career. Dean Arun Upneja says SHA's first dedicated master's program—undergraduates can already combine a bachelor's in hospitality with a master's in gastronomy from Metropolitan College—will also appeal to those in the field. "The degree provides the necessary ongoing education to remain competitive and knowledgeable in the changing industry," says Upneja, "and the educational background necessary for hospitality professionals to advance their careers." The program, which requires a hospitality internship, will offer evening courses, so students can choose to complete the program on a full- or part-time basis.



A HAND UP IN YOUR JOB HUNT

Seeking a career change? Eager to attend networking events? Looking for a job abroad? Handshake (bu.joinhandshake.com) can help. Use this new tool from BU's Center for Career Development to:

- Apply for jobs and internships
- Post cover letters and résumés
- Sign up for events and programs
- Access Going Global, a database for researching employers and careers in more than 30 countries

Questions about Handshake? Call SHA's Marriott Career Center at 617-358-6377. Established with a grant from the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, the center can help you polish your résumé, practice interview skills, and find professional opportunities. Learn more at bu.edu/hospitality/careers.

IMPACT OF YOUR DONATIONS

Your generous donations to the Campaign for Boston University have helped SHA:

- Host workshops, professional development activities, and events
- Send student groups to conferences and events in New York, Las Vegas, and Washington, D.C.
- Fund professional LinkedIn headshots for students
- Provide flights for students interning at Taj Hotels in India
- Upgrade classrooms and student lounge technology

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Instagram Takeover

Students snap pics to share their SHA internships
www.instagram.com/buschoolofhospitality



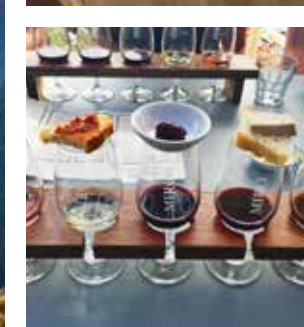
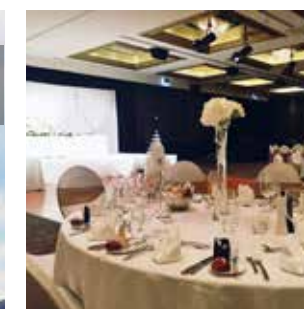
AMANDA DEJESUS ('18), food and beverage intern for Glacier Park, Inc., in Columbia Falls, Montana



AMANDA DEJESUS: "I visited Glacier once when I was a kid, and I always wanted to come back. I chose my location within the park (West Glacier Restaurant) because the HR director told me that I would be able to rotate through the most positions, including barista, ice cream scooper, dining room attendant, server, and line cook. I get lots of chances to shadow the assistant dining room managers as well. Serving ice cream is the best part of my job because it is so easy to make people happy. I always joke with my coworkers that I am either serving caffeine or ice cream, so my customers are always glad to see me. Quality is better than speed. Yes, working in food service is quick paced and you have to be good at multitasking, but if you slow down and do things correctly, you will benefit from it. Not only will you be less stressed out at work, but your customers will appreciate your better service."



MADLINE CHRISTIAN ('17), events intern at The Langham Auckland in Auckland, New Zealand



MADLINE CHRISTIAN: "I chose The Langham Auckland because I was very interested in hotel events and the luxury market. I spent the first half of my internship working in the banquets department, where I got to work weddings, galas, cocktail functions, business meetings, and large receptions. I spent the second half of my internship in the event sales department. This is one of the setups (inset right top) I helped with for a wedding in the banquets department. It's crazy how much goes into making sure these large functions are successful. I really enjoyed the experience, and I learned a lot about what goes into ensuring that a bride and groom are happy. One of the best parts of New Zealand is its wine. This photo (inset right bottom) is from a wine tour I did on Waiheke Island off of the coast of Auckland at Miro Vineyard. My internship at The Langham really opened my eyes to what goes into the success of a five-star event." 🍷

GABRIELLE GUARRACINO
AMANDA DEJESUS, MADELINE CHRISTIAN

Follow more students as they post photos from their internships around the world in SHA's ongoing Instagram Takeover at www.instagram.com/buschoolofhospitality.

What sets us apart from the competition?

Brand Personality
Fresh Clean Competent
Relaxing Classic Premium

INSIDE

A

Who is our audience?
Typical customer?
Desired customer?

Business travelers
Younger, modern travelers

REBRAND™

Classic font reflects our legacy - can we update to something more modern without compromising our brand personality?

How to revitalize an established brand—without losing your legacy

BY JULIE BUTTERS

Brand colors & psychology:

Blue: Trust, dependable, strength

Green: Peaceful, growth, health

UPSTAIRS FROM THE ELEGANT, WATER-VIEW DINING ROOM OF THE SMITH & WOLLENSKY STEAKHOUSE ON ATLANTIC WHARF IN BOSTON IS A WALK-IN FREEZER STOCKED WITH 9,500 POUNDS OF USDA PRIME BEEF.

"This is where the magic happens," says executive chef Matt King. The meat spends up to 28 days dry-aging, a tenderizing technique that concentrates flavor and that King likens to aging wine in oak. Few restaurants in the United States dry-age and butcher their meat on-site, he says. "This is the heart and soul of what we do."

Just a handful of years ago, however, you wouldn't have known that from looking at Smith & Wollensky's website. The web design was antiquated, and the site failed to tell the story of what made the boutique American steakhouse group special, including in-house dry-aging. Ads and marketing materials used a photo of grilled steak—though the restaurant charbroils.

"It was a very old, tired brand," says Kim Giguere-Lapine, senior vice president of marketing, who made it a priority to refresh the company's image—starting with the website—when she was hired in 2010.

Rebranding is about more than sprucing up a logo. "Your brand is your entire personality, your story, what sets you apart from others," says Giguere-Lapine ('89). It's what people remember about your company, and it can be conveyed through advertising, location, products, service, and pretty much anything else a customer might interact with. Apple isn't just hip because it has sleek ads—its products are trendsetting and even its store staff have geek chic. But customer perceptions, whether fair or not, can be powerful for the wrong reasons, too: McDonald's might have revamped its menu with salads and smoothies, but how many still think about super-sized, calorie-infused meals when they see the golden arches? For legacy brands, companies that are at least a decade old, forging a new identity can be like turning a tanker ship. And in an era where competitors can spring from almost nowhere—Airbnb went from zero to one million bookings in fewer than three years—that sluggishness can prove fatal.

"Companies that are comfortable, that are not taking initiative to go out there and change with the marketplace, are going to be left behind and go out of business," says Alex Friedman ('06), cofounder of Ruckus Brewing Company and Ruckus Marketing, whose clients include The Venetian hotel in Las Vegas and HSBC bank. An expert in boosting brand recognition who has written for *Entrepreneur* and *Forbes*, Friedman acknowledges that change is a lot harder for legacy brands, "and it costs a lot more money because what they're trying to do is change an opinion instead of establish one."

But the effort is worth it. Ruckus launched a marketing campaign for a facilities management firm that had a dated look (Friedman declines to name clients for confidentiality reasons) and convinced

the company to send staff out with iPads rather than paper forms. The technology conveyed a more modern feel to clients—and saved on data entry costs. Over the next couple of years, the firm grew “probably twice what they’d grown in any year prior.”

CONTENDING WITH NOVELTY

Michael Pereira ('05) knows firsthand how important it is to evolve with the marketplace. From 2013 to 2015, in roles such as head of global brand management, he helped lead the reinvention of Sheraton Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, which includes more than 500 properties in more than 70 countries. The company, established in 1937, is recognized around the globe. “If you saw Sheraton, you knew that there was always going to be a friendly staff member who’s going to welcome you; you were always going to feel at home,” says Pereira, now global brand manager, St. Regis and The Luxury Collection Hotels & Resorts. But that didn’t set Sheraton apart from competitors like Hilton and Marriott—or prevent guests, especially business travelers weary of the status quo, from drifting to flashier upstarts.

“HOW DO WE TAKE ON A YOUNGER, MORE MODERN TRAVELER WHO’S BEING ENTICED BY BOUTIQUE BRANDS, BY THE NEW AND THE GLITTERY, AND HOW DO WE USE OUR HERITAGE AND OUR LEGACY TO SAY THAT WE ARE THE BEST AT WHAT WE DO AND WE CAN COMPETE IN THOSE AREAS AS WELL?”

—MICHAEL PEREIRA ('05)

The question was, “How do we take on a younger, more modern traveler who’s being enticed by boutique brands, by the new and the glittery, and how do we use our heritage and our legacy to say that we are the best at what we do and we can compete in those areas as well?”

Pereira hired an agency to interview Sheraton owners and guests, who confirmed the need for a refresh. “Our look was dated and a bit



Michael Pereira

traditional,” says Pereira. “People wanted more personality and a more premium experience.” Those findings seem to be backed by the *Business Travel News* Hotel Brand Survey 2015, which put Sheraton down at number 8 in its Upper-Upscale Brand Satisfaction ranking: “The leading brands in each tier,” it said in its report on the survey, “have made efforts to appeal to

modern travelers and millennials, investing in more than just new pillows and better breakfasts.” Pereira shared the agency’s research within the company. He says having data like guest sentiment to highlight strengths and weaknesses can help win over internal skeptics, especially those at the top. Executives sweating shareholder reaction and their own job security might be more hesitant to change than those in



Kim Giguere-Lapine helped Smith & Wollensky refresh its “old, tired brand.”

REBRANDING 101

ROUND UP DATA. At Sheraton, Michael Pereira hired an agency to conduct interviews with guests and owners about the company. The data pinpointed the challenges Sheraton needed to overcome: “It was kind of the fuel that we needed to persevere.”

RALLY STAKEHOLDERS. The challenge of rebranding is sometimes “more about the people at the corporation changing their perspective on their own brand than it is about the look of the brand itself,” says Alex Friedman.

START SMALL, TEST EARLY. Kim Giguere-Lapine trialed a new menu at one Smith & Wollensky location and sparked a distinctive, freestanding brand, while Friedman helped a hotel try a new concept with model units in an existing property. Pereira suggests winning over internal skeptics with small changes like revamping a few website pages.

DON'T FORGET WHO YOU ARE. “You don’t have to lose your brand identity to modernize and bring yourself into the current era,” says Friedman. “And I think you do that by listening to the customer and improving the product, offering to meet their current expectations, and updating styles to reflect what’s current and modern in today’s society.”

MICHAEL D. SPENCER (GIGUERE-LAPINE); ANSON SMART (PEREIRA); ALEX FRIEDMAN

startups with less to lose. Still, an increase in revenue is “something that most people can get behind,” says Friedman. He suggests winning over any stragglers with small, achievable milestones (like updating a few pages of a website or creating a new sales brochure).

Pereira and his team focused on premium experiences, particularly for business travelers. He relaunched Sheraton’s Travelite program, which enables guests to leave a suitcase of clothes at a hotel for any forthcoming stays; while they’re away, the clothes will be laundered, pressed, and repacked. He also helped debut Paired, dining experiences that offer guests fine wine, beer, and local cuisine—such as Hong Kong Harbour-style roast Iberico pork ribs at the Sheraton Grand Macao—right in the hotel lobby or bar. Pereira says the program drew guests’ attention to Sheraton’s culinary talent. These and other initiatives have boosted Sheraton’s profits, he says. “Anytime metrics are up and you’re looking at double-digit growth, you know something is working.”

Sheraton’s work isn’t over. “Ensuring that we are attracting younger guests while not alienating other travelers is what navigates the constant updates and future programs,” says Pereira. He says one of the latest efforts at Sheraton is “looking at what today’s modern traveler expects from a fitness experience, whether it’s a tie-in to your wearable technology or virtual coaching. Rebranding efforts touch every aspect of the experience,” and rebranding teams need to “reimagine those experiences with a fresh perspective.”

FINE DINING IN A RECESSION

Giguere-Lapine’s challenge was similar to Pereira’s: giving a legacy brand (Smith & Wollensky was founded in 1977) a stronger identity that sets it apart in a crowded market. But she had fewer resources to do the job: she started out with just a small slice of the annual budget to spend.

Before the rebranding, Smith & Wollensky “was struggling to remain relevant in a recessionary market, especially outside of New York City,” says Giguere-Lapine. Full-page *Wall Street Journal* ads and a promotion where traders could exchange valueless stock for steak worked in Manhattan, but didn’t help the company beyond the borough. After conducting guest research, she created a digital advertising strategy tailored to each restaurant location—buying travel website ads to target tourists in Miami, for example. And Giguere-Lapine replaced the



Alex Friedman

company’s hodgepodge of fonts, logos, and taglines with a unified look, a clear tagline (“America’s steakhouse”), and a website that emphasized Smith & Wollensky’s

commitment to providing high-quality steak through in-house dry-aging and a partnership with Iowa farmers.

She also looked for untapped assets to increase the bottom line. One was Wollensky’s Grill, a gastro-pub adjoining some of the group’s restaurants. There was nothing unique about the menu, and Giguere-Lapine saw an opportunity to create a distinctive brand. In 2014, she helped switch up the Chicago menu to include lesser-known, less expensive cuts of beef like a “baseball cut” (the rounded, upper part of a sirloin steak) and shareable dishes. The venture helped reinvigorate the Chicago location, whose sales hadn’t been up to par; the group is now looking into the idea of opening freestanding Wollensky’s Grills in established markets.

Testing out a new concept quickly and on a small scale is a smart move, says Friedman. “If you launch perfect, you’ve launched too late. What you need to do is to get your product into a place where you’re comfortable that your customer is going to like it. They don’t have to fall in love on the first date, but they have to want more.” Friedman is branding for a hotel in New York City that built model units in an existing hotel they own as a test run. “Without telling guests, they just let them stay there and got feedback” and that informed construction plans for the company’s new hotel.

Despite the sluggish economy, Giguere-Lapine says the Smith & Wollensky refresh has made the company more profitable. Now, it’s looking to reinvest at home and abroad. Giguere-Lapine led the 2015 opening of Smith & Wollensky’s first international restaurant, in London, and is working on a documentary-style video showcasing a recent partnership with Iowa Premium, which sources superior-quality beef.

Along the way, she’s learned it’s important to not “try to be someone you are not. If you figure out what your loyalists love about you, simply stick to it and connect with more of them.” The partnership with Iowa Premium, for example, led to more online reviewers lauding the taste of Smith & Wollensky steaks.

“Heritage and legacy are absolutely important because they got you where you are today,” says Pereira. “You have to evolve yourself from who you were, take the best of what you have, and make it better.”

Fancy Flicks

CINEMEX COFOUNDER ADOLFO FASTLICHT ('89) BRINGS AN UPMARKET THEATER EXPERIENCE TO THE STATES

BY ANDREW THURSTON

AN ARTISAN ALMOND CROISSANT. Seared filet mignon with a red wine jus. A glass of the 2012 Robert Mondavi Cabernet Sauvignon. And a really big bucket of popcorn washed down with a blue raspberry Icee. At The Lot, a boutique entertainment complex in San Diego's La Jolla neighborhood, a premium multiscreen cinema sits under the same roof as a fine dining restaurant, a bar, and a café.

Some people stop in for their daily coffee, some for breakfast or lunch, some for dinner or a movie.

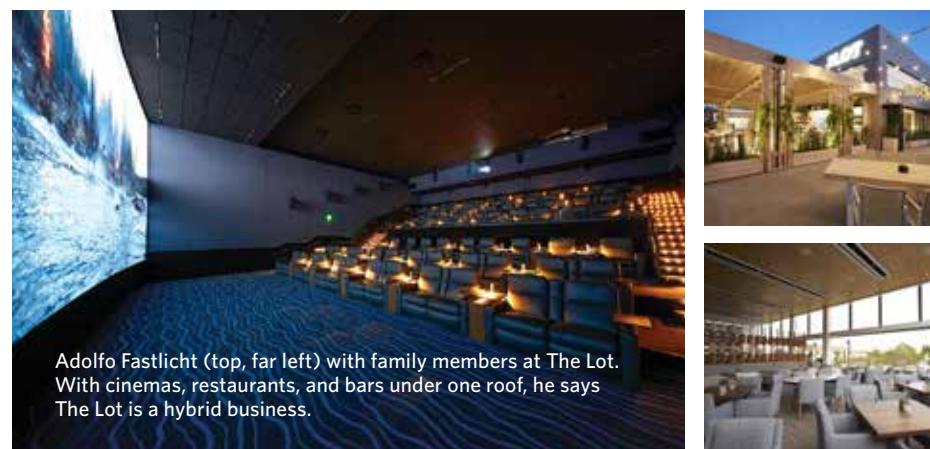
"The ultimate objective," says The Lot cofounder and CEO Adolfo Fastlicht ('89), "is that if our clients go there for coffee, they will be back for food; if they go there for food, they'll go back for drinks; if they're there for drinks, they'll go back for coffee. It's a self-fulfilling, positive referral."

“WE LIKE TO SAY WE'RE IN THE LIFESTYLE ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS MORE THAN IN THE CINEMA BUSINESS.”

—ADOLFO FASTLICHT ('89)

The inaugural venue opened in La Jolla in October 2015; the second—also in San Diego—opened six months later. "We like to say we're in the lifestyle entertainment business more than in the cinema business," says Fastlicht. "Ours is a business concept that really becomes this hybrid of sorts, much like your conventional hotel concept where you have multiple outlets that all work off the rooms. Instead of us having rooms, what we have is cinemas."

It's just over 20 years since Fastlicht opened his first cinema. In 1995, he and two classmates from Harvard Business School—with backing from J.P. Morgan



Adolfo Fastlicht (top, far left) with family members at The Lot. With cinemas, restaurants, and bars under one roof, he says The Lot is a hybrid business.

and other investors—opened Cinemex in Fastlicht's native Mexico. Fastlicht and his partners were capitalizing on a gap in the market: for years, Mexicans had been stuck with decrepit state-run movie houses, but in 1992, the government deregulated, selling off theaters to private investors. The Cinemex founders saw a chance to be among the first to bring the American cinema experience to Mexico. Within six years, Cinemex had expanded to 317 screens. *Forbes* later reported that the three classmates had managed to raise \$21.5 million—in exchange for a share of the prospective company—to get Cinemex off the ground. In 2002, Oaktree Capital Management acquired Cinemex for approximately \$295 million.

After later helping a rival Mexican chain, Cinépolis, open luxury cinemas in the United States, Fastlicht thinks he has a similar market opportunity with The Lot. He says premium cinemas are still a relatively new concept in the States, despite being more established in Europe and Australia. At The Lot, moviegoers don't

have to wedge themselves into skinny seats or crane over the head of the giant in row E. For around 20 bucks, The Lot patrons get a reserved, expansive, auto-reclining leather seat and waiter service.

"We see ourselves as a company that is in the forefront and we are, we believe, the company that is out there creating a new standard," says Fastlicht, who credits SHA for giving him his foundational hospitality industry knowledge and whose family includes other Terriers: brother Jeffrey ('91), sister Leslie (UNI'94), and son Sam (CGS'19).

Fastlicht is aiming to grow the company and has plans to expand up the California coast, adding a couple of locations annually for the next decade. He says having a solid, but flexible, business plan is essential.

"There will always be things that will come out of left field," he says, "so having a plan is key because at least it gives you a sense of direction. But then being able to modify that plan, to update it, to tweak it, to make it better is key. You need to be nimble enough to react." ■



WHAT IS THE BEST WAY FOR HOTELS TO COMPETE WITH AIRBNB?

We asked three SHA advisory board members to answer this question for *Check In* readers.

Warren Fields

Principal & CIO, Pyramid Hotel Group



"To combat Airbnb's growing popularity, hotels must better understand what the decision drivers are for their various guest segments. Technology accessibility is essential in selling any good or service in today's digital world. Airbnb's website combines rich visuals with limited wording, providing easy browsing experiences. Hotels must maintain user-friendly sites to advertise more enticing experiences and enable quicker bookings. 'Live there' is Airbnb's signature tagline; in boarding among locals, Airbnb advertises a more authentic stay. Hotels are improving on helping guests curate local community experiences, which must be boldly advertised and catered to the property's location, whether it be the concierge's weekly list of 'undiscovered' restaurants or the complimentary shuttle to area attractions. Hotels must offer creative solutions in addition to highlighting amenities and hospitality not possible through Airbnb, like security, food and beverage, and health clubs. . . . There are many strategies to highlight services only hotels have the resources to offer."

Joy Rothschild

Chief Human Resources Officer, Omni Hotels & Resorts



"When Airbnb first launched, many hoteliers were quick to dismiss the concept, assuming that the company's target demographic would not be the same as theirs. In analyzing booking data over the past few years, however, we've learned this assumption is not true. Airbnb's largest growing segment of customers is [people] 35 to 44 years of age who are looking for accommodations in a convenient location with good overall value for their money. These consumers are not only considering Airbnb accommodations when booking travel, but are also considering upscale hotels. The biggest benefit that hotels—like Omni Hotels & Resorts—offer against Airbnb is service and amenities; for example, Omni taps into our customers' desire for local engagement by providing locally sourced food and beverages. At Omni Amelia Island Plantation Resort, the executive chef tends to eight beehives and utilizes the harvested honey in many of the resort's dishes. These experiences are not offered or available for guests who book through Airbnb."

Eric Danziger

CEO, Trump Hotel Collection



"I often say that we are in the people business. We are in the business of being hospitable, the business of welcoming people. Our industry is built on service and experience, not just on the rooms at our hotels.

"Today, more than ever, given all the choices travelers have—whether staying at a branded hotel, an independent property, or a friend's or stranger's home—it is critical for hoteliers to focus on making guests feel connected and engaged with the on-property team, the location, and the overall experience. This is, of course, in addition to understanding guest needs and preferences, and making their experience from start to finish as effortless, flawless, and meaningful as possible. We have to listen to our guests and do our best to exceed their expectations. That's been true from the very beginning, and it remains so today. We must be fierce competitors, providing the best service, product, and quality in our competitive space." ■

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE LOT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WARREN FIELDS, OMNI HOTELS & RESORTS, AND ERIC DANZIGER

SHA welcomes news of your professional and personal achievements and milestones. Please write to us at busha@bu.edu.

Connect with SHA online at [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com). (Under *Groups*, search “BU School of Hospitality Administration.”)

SUPRIYA DESAI ('91) runs Desai Transformation LLC, a management consulting and executive coaching business that works with companies to develop leadership and operations agility, and helps business leaders implement organizational change programs. Supriya writes that she remembers “my exciting ‘HOFO’—what we used to call the School for HOtel and FOod Administration—days fondly and think often of my talented friends! Long lost friends can reach me directly at soupyd@yahoo.com. I'd LOVE to hear from you.” She invites fellow SHA alums to learn more about her firm at www.desaitransformation.com.

JAE CHO ('94) writes that he celebrated his daughter Sarah Cho's second birthday on July 4. He has been a bus operator with the MBTA for two years and uses his degree “as I interact with my

passengers, always remembering from Professor Paret's class that customers are always right and to treat your fellow employees how you want to be treated. I am loving every minute as I serve the public in their transportation needs!”

EMILY WILLIAMS KNIGHT ('95) of Southlake, Tex., was recently named a winner of the 14th annual Road Warrior Contest, held by *American Way*, the inflight magazine published by American Airlines. As part of the grand prize, she vacationed in Belize.

CHRIS LORINO ('95) left Starwood Hotels after 18 years and is now regional director of operations for boutique hotel company Provenance Hotels. He is based in Seattle and oversees operations for three hotels, as well as assisting with new acquisitions.



Jae Cho ('94) with his daughter.



Lauren Carr Morado ('02) welcomed her first child in 2016.

JAMES SHEPARD (CGS'95, CAS'96, SHA'98) and his wife, Idella, are the proud owners of the Cornwall Country Market in Cornwall Bridge, Conn. “Home of the best bacon, egg, and cheese; Reuben; and steak & cheese in the northwest corner!”

AMANDA GUILÉ ('00) and her husband, Mark, joyfully announce the birth of their son, Arthur Émile Guile, on March 25, 2016, in Charlotte, N.C.

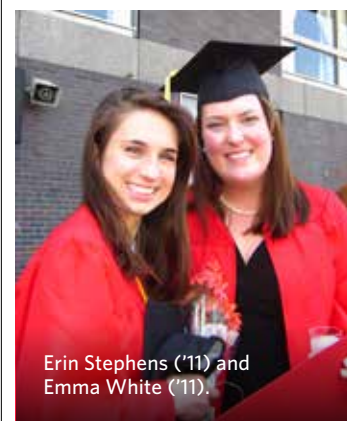
ANNA BRISKMAN (CGS'00, SHA'02) writes that she was “hired away from ARAMARK, where I was the director of catering, executive dining, and events for four and a half years. I was hired by the client: BMO Harris Bank, in Chicago. I am now an event manager.” Email her at Anna.briskman@gmail.com.

LAUREN CARR MORADO ('02) and her husband, Jacob, welcomed their first child, a daughter, Quinnlee Sophia Morado, on March 2, 2016. Lauren writes that it was “a super special delivery, as she and I share a birthday! We are thoroughly enjoying her and already think she's growing up too fast. I would love to hear from SHA classmates.” Email Lauren at lauren.carr@rosewoodhotels.com.

DEVON MOSLEY ('04) is celebrating the second anniversary of launching agencyIMD, a New York-based integrated marketing agency specializing in hospitality business launches. He writes that his “team steps in for six months to handle the creative direction, social media, and PR for the opening of hospitality venues, and has managed openings in NYC, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles.”

LESLIE LONE ('06) started a new role in March 2016 as the events manager for Good Shepherd Services (@GoodShepherdNYC) a youth and family development nonprofit organization serving more than 33,000 people in New York City. Leslie writes, “This is my first role outside of hotels. I was with Starwood for over a decade.”

ERIN STEPHENS ('11) writes, “To **EMMA WHITE ('11)**: Congratulations on your engagement! I can't wait to see you walk down the aisle.”



Erin Stephens ('11) and Emma White ('11).

BLAKE TRIPLETT ('11) was named the 2015 Revenue Management Leader of the Year for Starwood Hotels North America in the role of director of revenue management at The Tremont Chicago Hotel. Blake has since moved to Austin, Tex., to open the Sheraton Georgetown Texas Hotel & Convention Center.

JAE CHO; LAUREN CARR MORADO; SHANNON STEPHENS (STEPHENS AND WHITE); ANDREW WANG; JARED KUZIA

A SEAT AT THE COUNTER

Guests get a view of the kitchen at alum's tasting-menu-only restaurant • BY LARA EHRLICH

DINNER AT PETER UNGÁR'S TASTING COUNTER, AN INTIMATE RESTAURANT IN SOMERVILLE, MASS., HAS MUCH IN COMMON WITH A NIGHT AT THE THEATER—you pay in advance and get a great show. Named Best Fine Dining Restaurant for 2016 by *Boston Magazine* and the 2015 Best Restaurant of the Year by the *Boston Globe*, Tasting Counter offers a multicourse tasting menu prepared while patrons face an open kitchen. Ungár ('98) spoke with *Check In* about his path from watching Julia Child shows as a Texas teen, to working at Restaurant Aujourd'hui in the Four Seasons Hotel Boston, to launching the private dining service The Dining Alternative—to opening his own restaurant in 2014.



At Peter Ungár's Tasting Counter, watching the chefs is part of the experience.

As a high school student in Forth Worth, Texas, you were drawn to French cooking and had your first apprenticeship at a French restaurant in your hometown. Why?

When I was younger, I'd watch Jacques Pépin (Hon.'11) and Julia Child (Hon.'76) every day after school. I was enthralled with the process of taking basic, natural ingredients and transforming them into something that delights the senses. It's the same sentiment that inspires me to cook today.

What led you to launch The Dining Alternative, hosting fine dining experiences in clients' homes, in 2003?

During my last year at Four Seasons Hotel Boston, I started creating private events at the request of friends and relatives. The most enjoyable aspect of hosting private events was being able to interact directly with the guests I was cooking for, which motivated me to be creative and explore more unique preparations. At each event, I'd be encouraged by the guests to take up private cooking full-time. After six years at the Four Seasons, I felt it was time to try something completely different.

How did these experiences prepare you for establishing your first restaurant, Tasting Counter?

I operated The Dining Alternative for nearly 10 years, which really helped me develop my own style of cooking and gave me the confidence to cook in front of guests. Before doing any private cooking, I was always back in the kitchen, where I never saw guests receive their dishes. Witnessing guests taking

pleasure in my cooking was a tremendous motivating factor when running The Dining Alternative, and something I wanted to make sure I carried over when developing the restaurant. Guests would also always comment on how fascinating it was to watch dishes come together right before them. This was another major reason why I designed Tasting Counter with the guest experience at the core.

Can you tell us about the restaurant's pay-in-advance tasting-menu-only concept?

The pay-in-advance and tasting-menu-only concepts allow us to serve our guests better and at a greater value. There is very little waste since we are cooking for an exact number of guests each night. Since guests have paid in advance, it not only ensures that they show up as expected, but ultimately heightens their enjoyment because the financial transaction is removed from the dining experience. Furthermore, guests are continually enthralled by the origin of their food, not only where and how it is grown and harvested, but where and how it is prepared and cooked.

What is your favorite dish to cook?

I'm most interested in preparing anything that comes from the sea. The ocean might as well be outer space in terms of how varied and foreign products can be. There is endless variety that changes with the seasons, with equally varied preparation options, ranging from completely raw to fully cooked to anywhere in between—all of which we employ at the restaurant.

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