ASSISTANT PROFESSORS
SEAN JUNG + RICHARD CURRIE
ON HOW DATA ANALYTICS
AND MACHINE LEARNING
ARE SHAPING THE INDUSTRY
MORE THAN EVER

DATA-DRIVEN
HOSPITALITY

BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

FRONT
of the HOUSE

From the Dean

Dear SHA Family,
As I pondered writing this letter, I couldn't help thinking about ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot that's been all the rage these days. ChatGPT is powered by OpenAI.org's large language model—a groundbreaking natural language processing (NLP) technology that uses deep learning algorithms to understand human language and generate insights. The possibilities are endless—ChatGPT can be used in speech recognition systems, machine translation programs, text summarizers, and the creation of interactive dialogues with humans.

Data analytics and AI—specifically NLP—have the potential to be real game-changers in many industries, including hospitality, but some people are understandably wary of the ways they are used. We've faced questions like these before when new technology was introduced—remember all the fuss about calculators bringing an end to our mental math skills?

This issue's cover story highlights the possibilities for using machine learning and data analytics in the hospitality industry. By utilizing deep learning techniques, we can gain valuable insights necessary to hire employees who match better with our needs. Optimizing our use of data analytics can help us meet customer demands while enhancing our revenue-generating potential. Leveraging these approaches will position us well not only with current customers but those of the future.

I am curious to hear your thoughts on using big data and machine learning in the hospitality industry. Share them with me at aupneja@bu.edu.

Sincerely,

Arun Upneja

THIS PAGE: JANICE CHECCHIO; FACING PAGE: DAVID FOX

A PhD Pathway
for People of Color

By Marc Chalufour

When Arun Upneja looks around BU's School of Hospitality Administration, where he's been the dean since 2013, he doesn't see many people of color (POC) on the faculty. "In the upper echelons of hospitality, just like the rest of society, we are not diversified enough," he says. Four years ago, he set out to do something about it—an effort that culminated in the creation of the POC PhD Pathway Conference.

Upneja began by speaking to the deans at more than a dozen hospitality schools. He found they were also eager to diversify their faculty—but they couldn't find any candidates. He estimated that out of approximately 180 students working toward hospitality PhDs at the time, just five of them were Black, Latinx, or Native American. Before worrying about creating a more diverse faculty, Upneja says, "we needed to talk about a different problem, which is getting more PhD students."

So the deans kept talking, including their PhD directors in the process. They decided that a first step would be to introduce promising students from underrepresented groups to their programs. "Part of the reason they don't think about a PhD is lack of mentors," Upneja says.

The first POC PhD Pathway Conference was held online in May 2021. More than a dozen graduate students from 13 universities participated. "It was absolutely wonderful," Upneja says. "That conference was an eye-opener for everyone involved. The students were actively participating. They were asking questions."

On April 8 and 9, 2022, SHA welcomed two dozen students and representatives from hospitality schools across the country to the first in-person conference, at BU. Ray Bennett, then Marriott International's president of franchising in the United States and Canada, delivered the keynote address. (Bennett died a few weeks later.) Nine schools sent their hospitality PhD directors.

For 2023, Upneja hopes to reach a broader group of students. Part of doing that is finding financial support for the conference, which

Hospitality students and faculty from across the US attended the first in-person POC PhD Pathway Conference at SHA on April 8, 2022.

thus far has lacked a dedicated budget. Individual schools, along with a gift from Bennett, funded student travel to the event in 2022. "I'm hopeful that other people will step up and provide funding," Upneja says, adding that without travel stipends some students aren't able to attend.

Even after just two years, Upneja expects the conference to have a measurable effect on the number of PhD candidates from underrepresented groups. "It's going to take a couple of years for the results to be fully reflected," Upneja says. Still, he anticipates four or five attendees from each year to enter PhD programs.

Another measure of success will be inspiring an industry-wide movement toward diversity. "We don't have enough people of color in master's programs. We don't have enough in undergraduate programs. How do you reach students in high schools?" Upneja says. "That's something that needs an institutional effort by the industry. This problem is pervasive in our society and particularly in the hospitality industry."

Information about the 2023 POC PhD Pathway Conference will be available at **bu.edu/hospitality/events/conferences/poc-phd-pathway-program**.

Learning by Doing

For SHA students entering hospitality, field experience is vital

By Steve Holt

A bartender makes drinks at Union Square Hospitality Group's Ci Siamo restaurant, which opened in 2021.

There are lessons a student preparing for a career in restaurants, hotels, or another hospitality field can only learn in a hands-on setting. Theo Deschamps De Paillette spent the summer revamping and reopening restaurants for one of New York City's premier culinary empires, an experience he one day hopes to apply to opening his own hotel. For Kyle McMullin, the concept that businesses create value based on a hierarchy of customer needs landed more squarely while hearing from executives from Disneyland Paris and the Paris Olympic Organizing Committee.

Leora Lanz, an associate professor and assistant dean of academic affairs, says that as important as it is for students to pore over case studies, definitions, and principles, seeing those principles at work in hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality fields provides them with an invaluable perspective.

"To see [principles] applied in real-world situations and to see how other people handle them teaches

us best practices—What would I do the same way? What would I do differently?" Lanz says. "It's really important for the students to learn from others who are doing this so that they can come into the world well armed."

In 2022, Lanz took groups of students to New York City to observe and learn from Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group (USHG)—an opportunity that emerged from a series of visits from USHG executives to SHA's Boston campus—and to Paris to study hospitality marketing in an unforgettable setting. She is planning to repeat both experiences in 2023, albeit with a few changes based on learnings from 2022, and add one other: a study abroad trip to Panama to learn from executives at the fast-growing Selina, which offers a global network of short-term rentals and coworking spaces to those looking to work remotely. *Check In* spoke with Lanz, as well as several SHA students, about what makes for a great field experience in a rapidly changing hospitality industry.

Making a Restaurant Empire Better

At just 22, Theo Deschamps De Paillette has spent the last five years working in hotels from Paris and London to South Africa and Singapore. He even found time to do a gap year in Costa Rica, where he worked in a boutique hotel and became fluent in Spanish.

"I love hospitality, I love restaurants, I love hotels," says De Paillette, a master's student at ESSEC Business School in Paris who has completed part of his degree at SHA through a partnership between the two schools. "It's something that speaks to me because every guest is a new experience, every day is a new journey, and more than any other industry, every day is an improvement."

As part of their exchange program with SHA, De Paillette and a group of graduate students from BU and other colleges met with Meyer and other executives from his restaurant empire—with more than a dozen eateries in its portfolio, including Gramercy Tavern and The Modern—in both Boston and on a professional spring break trip in New York City. At the end of the three-day experience in April 2022, De Paillette found himself in a group interview vying to return to New York

THE MODERN

City June 6 through August 12, 2022, for a summer internship. He got the job, joining 25 other interns from around the world.

De Paillette's main project was working closely with USHG director of operations Joe Tarasco and vice president of operations John Ragan to prepare Maialino—once a flagship restaurant in the group that closed during the pandemic—for a fall reopening. He also helped develop strategies to increase walk-in business at the four locations of the elevated café Daily Provisions and build concepts the group may pursue for future restaurants. For their capstone project, groups of interns researched and pitched to executives ideas and programs to help expand the business. De Paillette's team, which he led, created ChefUp—an incubator program for independent and underrepresented chefs to open their own restaurants—and presented it to Meyer and other USHG executives and board members. De Paillette says he was taken aback by the trust USHG placed in him and his fellow interns, and he hopes to work with the company again— perhaps even opening its first hotel one day.

"They don't know us, they don't know how we work. I'm French, and English is not my natural language," he says, describing a potential barrier to success. "They trust us doing something huge, working on some projects that are very, very important. Trust is something that takes time to acquire, and you can lose it pretty quickly. I hope we gave them reason to be proud of us."

Summer in the City of Lights

When Maggie Thompson learned she could take her Introduction to Hospitality Marketing course in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, the Milwaukee, Wis., native's mind was made up.

"I figured there was no better place to learn about hospitality, especially in the marketing field, than a place known for its amazing culture, food, and tourist attractions," says Thompson ('25), who participated in BU's Paris Study Abroad program in summer 2022.

Kyle McMullin (CAS'24, SHA'24) had never traveled outside the US before joining the Paris Study Abroad program. McMullin, who learned French in high school in Osterville, Mass., says the experience exceeded his expectations. "Our guest lecturers, exhibitions, and travels will forever be in my mind as I continue my career."

Thompson and McMullin were among the 10 BU students on the trip, which was led and taught by Lanz on BU's campus in Paris May 23 to June 15, 2022. Students read case reviews and texts covering the principles of marketing within the hospitality sector, but their primary classroom was France itself. They learned about segmentation and sustainability from representatives from hotelier Accor, press relations and influencer marketing from Paris-based PR firm Pascal Venot, and food and beverage customer service at restaurants and museums in picturesque Giverny. They even visited with members of the Paris 2024 Olympic Organizing Committee, including its president, to hear how the group is marketing the games. Thompson's most memorable excursion, though, was to Le Royal Monceau, a palatial hotel in Paris.

"Their hospitality was unmatched, and their presentations and tours were engaging and unforgettable," she recalls. "There is a significant emphasis on art in the hotel, and each of the design elements had a certain story behind it, which I found fascinating."

Lanz says she couldn't have designed a study abroad experience in Paris that kept students in a classroom the whole time.

"They're going to learn about Hilton and Marriott and Darden and all the other companies that impact hospitality in the [United] States through every other class that they'll have here at BU," says Lanz. "If we're going to be in Paris, let's understand the culture and learn about what's going on over there. Each of our classes was an experience on its own, involving meeting with industry executives and professionals, whether it's palace hotels, or 2-star hotels, or the Olympic Organizing Committee, or Monet's home, or the Gallery Dior, which is experiential luxury retail. It definitely pushed the boundaries of hospitality—it wasn't just lodging."

A New Panama Experience

Lanz says plans are underway for several experiential learning trips in 2023, including three Spring Break Professional and Networking Experiences for graduate students. Groups of graduate students will return to New York City and Paris in March, and a third experience has been added to Panama.

In Panama, students will visit local historical and cultural sites and meet with representatives from one group of Panama's Indigenous peoples, the Emberá, and have the opportunity to meet with executives from Selina, an international short-term rental booking company whose stock was publicly traded for the first time in October 2022.

"The plan is to meet with Selina executives for a mini-'manager-in-training' program to understand the brand and the needs of its customers—global 'digital nomads,'" says Lanz, who points out that the Panama experience is a result of relationships built with Selina executives during SHA's 2022 Hospitality Leadership Summit.

"The purpose of the visit with the local peoples is to participate in true sustainability and engagement, which is also a key part of the Selina brand and an opportunity for us to contribute to local social responsibility."

Leora Lanz, an associate professor and assistant dean of academic affairs (front row, third from left), took students to New York City to visit and learn from Union Square Hospitality Group's eateries.

CEDRIC MOLEY; USHG (COASTERS)

DESTINATION DATA

BY MARA SASSOON

DATA ANALYTICS AND MACHINE LEARNING ARE SHAPING THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY MORE THAN EVER, BUT EXPERTS SAY THERE ARE STILL PLENTY OF UNEXPLORED OPPORTUNITIES

> "THIS IS A NEWER AREA. THERE ARE SOME HOTELS THAT ARE THINKING ABOUT HOW TO CREATE THE PERFECT ENVIRONMENT FOR YOU BASED ON YOUR PAST EXPERIENCES AT ANOTHER ONE OF THEIR PROPERTIES, OR BASED ON DATA THEY HAVE ON WHAT TYPE OF PERSON YOU ARE AND YOUR PREFERENCES."
>
> —*Sean Jung*

If you've eaten at a restaurant or had takeout this week, chances are you interacted with a point-of-sale system when you placed your order or paid for your food.

Point-of-sale (POS) systems are an especially important tool during a time of rising food costs and labor shortages. They don't just make it easy for you when you're dining out; they also provide a wealth of valuable data—sales figures, tipping trends, best-selling dishes, average table turnover time, employee productivity—that can ultimately help inform a restaurant's business decisions. These systems can even mine individual guest data, enabling businesses to target promotions and tailor experiences to loyal customers.

In its 2023 POS Software Trends Report, *Hospitality Technology* magazine says that "using data to understand guest behavior" is a top goal for restaurants and notes that enhancing menus, upselling or offering discounts to customers, and refining staffing and inventory practices are some of the key ways restaurants hope to capitalize on the data they collect from their POS mechanisms.

Restaurants are one example of how the hospitality industry is using an abundance of data. Across the industry, data analytics and machine learning—a process by which the information is analyzed by creating algorithms that distill data and pull useful insights from it—have become important tools for optimizing both customer and employee experiences and improving companies' bottom lines. They're used to determine airline ticket prices and timing, predict theme park wait times, and help companies recruit top talent.

All of this only skims the surface in the ways data can be leveraged. Now, as the field of data analytics quickly advances, can the hospitality industry keep up and make the most of the information it has access to?

STREAMLINING RECRUITMENT

Data analytics are increasingly playing an important role in recruitment, training, and employee wellness, which is critical to an industry that has faced exceptionally high turnover rates since before the pandemic.

Richard Currie, a SHA assistant professor of leadership and workplace psychology and an expert in industrial and organizational psychology, says the use of data analytics in hiring in particular has grown rapidly in the last decade. He points to the video interviewing platform HireVue, which is used by hospitality companies such as Hilton, Marriott, and Carnival. HireVue can do initial screening interviews, filming candidates as they answer a set of questions. "It will record their audio and video, and essentially, the software program will look at all kinds of different information from that recording—the tone of your voice, your word choice, as well as nonverbal cues like eye movement and your facial expressions," Currie says. The software analyzes the data collected from the recorded interview
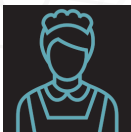
to determine if the candidate is qualified to move on in the interview process. "Organizations or recruiters always have the option to determine how much leeway the program has, but this kind of software reduces that burden for recruiters and for HR personnel who are involved in the selection process."

Résumé screening, sometimes called applicant tracking systems, is another area of hiring where analytics have been introduced in order to streamline the recruitment process, says Currie. Many of today's largest companies use software that parses résumés for keywords to determine if a candidate has qualities that would make them a good fit for a role. Only then is the résumé passed along to an individual for further review.

"The hospitality industry is facing staffing shortages far worse than most other industries right now," says Currie. "With that in mind, I think a lot of big data applications are going to be in selection recruitment. Organizations need to fill positions, and they need to do it well."

Automated recruitment tools are often touted as helping to reduce recruitment bias and improve diversity. But that's not a fail-safe. A 2019 *Harvard Business Review* article, "All the Ways Hiring Algorithms Can Introduce Bias," notes that "most hiring algorithms will drift toward bias by default."

"Diversity, equity, and inclusion are primary considerations for human resources professionals and industrial psychologists," says Currie. "Most organizations aren't intentionally engaging in discrimination, but when they rely on machine learning

"THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING WRONG WITH BIG DATA AND MACHINE LEARNING SOLUTIONS, BUT IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE INFORMATION YOU PUT INTO THAT ALGORITHM IS GOING TO IMPACT THE QUALITY OF WHAT YOU GET OUT OF IT."

—*Richard Currie*
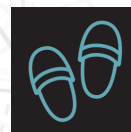
Sean Jung (left), an assistant professor of hospitality analytics, and Richard Currie, an assistant professor of leadership and workplace psychology.

to make decisions for them, it's kind of a garbage in/garbage out mentality." For that reason, he says, hiring software needs to draw from data that represents a diverse pool of applicants. "There's absolutely nothing wrong with big data and machine learning solutions, but it's important to note that the information you put into that algorithm is going to impact the quality of what you get out of it."

Currie has also been observing how data analytics and machine learning are being incorporated into employee training. He has the students in his organizational leadership classes work with the software SalesBoost, a program that offers exercises to train employees in soft skills such as listening and communication through voice analysis. It focuses on how they speak, including the tone and cadence of their voice. "I think it does a great job of supplementing the hard skills that I'm teaching my students, such as how to delegate and how to effectively motivate your staff," he says. "But communication and listening skills, compassion, all these other things are equally important and very difficult to convey without some kind of a simulation. It's an interesting application of machine learning in the broader field of organizational psychology."

"SO MUCH OPPORTUNITY"

Zach Demuth knows hotels. He is global head of hotels research at the commercial real estate company JLL and worked in revenue management for Marriott for almost a decade. He wears a pained look when he says, "Sometimes, the hotel industry can be truly archaic when it comes to technology." As a result, says Demuth ('11), there's a corresponding lag in how the industry has used big data.

"Most hotels do a really good job of selling rooms, but they don't do a good job of selling much else," he says. "It's mind boggling to me that resorts spend so much money and time getting guests to come to the hotel, but once the guest has walked in the door, they do nothing to maximize their opportunity with a captive audience, whether through identifying and reaching out to guests who would purchase a spa treatment or rent a cabana or whatever—the technology to do that just isn't there."

Sean Jung, a SHA assistant professor of hospitality analytics, agrees that the hotel industry is optimizing data and machine learning in some areas better than others. Jung says data analytics are being used well at the purchasing stage, through online travel agencies like Expedia and Booking. com. "These platforms try to suggest places to go based on your searches, based on price points you've entered before," he says. "They basically have all these data sets, and they are using machine

learning to best predict what you're going to purchase. They're successfully using machine learning to make you spend, by targeting experiences based on everything that you've actually inputted in your browser already."

Like Demuth, Jung sees missed opportunities for using data once a guest gets to a property. "This is a newer area," says Jung, who specializes in strategy management, or finding optimal business solutions to create profitability. "There are some hotels that are thinking about how to create the perfect environment for you based on your past experiences at another one of their properties, or based on data they have on what type of person you are and your preferences." The tools are there for gathering that information—whether from using an app or from answers to guest surveys, for example—but are often underutilized. "Imagine tailored guest experiences, where you have features like providing you the right temperature the moment you enter your hotel room," he says. "Or, if you always forget a toothbrush, the concierge will call you in advance asking if you need a toothbrush. They'll know this type of information based on your past experiences."

Jung sees the beginnings of this kind of personalization in Wynn hotels. Their rooms feature Amazon Echos, which guests can use to perform tasks like opening and closing curtains, controlling lights, and adjusting the temperature. Jung says he can imagine using the information from these devices to inform future guest experiences.

> "IT'S MIND BOGGLING TO ME THAT RESORTS SPEND SO MUCH MONEY AND TIME GETTING GUESTS TO COME TO THE HOTEL, BUT ONCE THE GUEST HAS WALKED IN THE DOOR, THEY DO NOTHING TO MAXIMIZE THEIR OPPORTUNITY WITH A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE."

—*Zach Demuth*

Still, Demuth says, too many hotels can't identify the general consumer behavior of their guests. "That's the low-hanging fruit," he says. "When people stay at a hotel, they essentially live there for three or four days, and there is so much consumer behavior that happens in that time frame. Why are we as an industry not utilizing that data more? The reality is that data exists, and there are many businesses that can tell you that kind of information to a very granular degree. I know there are some companies popping up that gather this information from third-party apps or even from cookies in your web browser. That's huge."

At JLL, it's Demuth's job to find the data to back up or drive business decisions. He leads the company's hotels research group, identifying pitfalls and trends across the hospitality industry and analyzing where the industry is headed before presenting those findings to both internal stakeholders and external clients. For one recent project, he helped a private equity group that had purchased a large number of hotels to strategize which markets to target and how to expand over the next few years.

Demuth says he developed a passion for data analytics at Marriott, where he focused on corporate distribution and revenue strategy for the company's luxury hotels.

Many Wynn hotel rooms have Amazon Echos. Jung imagines using the information from these devices to inform future guest experiences.

"What I really enjoyed was understanding market dynamics—what drives demand to a hotel, what drives demand to a region, and how hotels can do their best to capture that demand," he says. "In my current role, I'm still trying to figure out what drives macro demand to hotels, either from an investment perspective or from an operational perspective—and what data do you need to support all of that."

Another area where Demuth thinks data analytics are being underutilized is yield management, or dynamic pricing, where businesses change their pricing based on demand.

"I think we as a society have gotten very used to paying different amounts for the same thing—Uber, for example," he says. "But, for whatever reason, the hotel industry

has been very hesitant to adopt it outside of rooms, and I think that, as it relates to big data and particularly as it relates to an industry that has really struggled over the last few years, profitability is more important than ever." Offerings such as spa services, golf, and meeting room rentals could be subject to variable pricing, he says.

"Pretty much every hotel can very clearly tell you when their busy times are at the spa, and yet massages are the same price no matter what. Most hotels use machine learning for their room pricing, so why not use it everywhere else where it makes sense? There's so much opportunity with data—but it's often a missed opportunity. I think that's starting to change."

Hotels have the opportunity to use data to personalize guest experiences—for instance, does a guest usually request extra towels? Restaurants get valuable data from their POS systems, like table turnover time and popular dishes.

SHUTTERSTOCK/GOWITHSTOCK (TOWELS); SHUTTERSTOCK/MICHAEL WAPP (AMAZON ECHO); ISTOCK/DESIGN56 (POS DEVICE)

Nashville Hot Chicken Comes to Cambridge, Mass.

Alex Kim ('16) brings a popular Southern dish to the Northeast

By Mara Sassoon

While a student at SHA, Los Angeles native Alex Kim saw a hole in Boston's restaurant scene. "Boston hasn't gotten this reputation as a diverse eating city like some other major cities," he says. "But I think there's a lot of potential here." Kim ('16) decided to stick around after graduating and explore that potential. He attended the Hyatt Hotels food and beverage corporate management training program, and went on to become an assistant manager for the Boston-area vegetarian chain Clover Food Lab and general manager of the fast casual seafood restaurant Eventide Fenway—a role he had at the height of the pandemic. "Those were the most difficult years of my career, but I learned so much. It was trial by several fires. I can't sugarcoat that."

In 2019, he started to make plans to launch his own restaurant. Three years later, he opened Hot Chix, a restaurant serving Nashville hot chicken, in Cambridge's Inman Square, with his two partners, Will Yoo and Alex Nystedt. Nashville-style hot chicken, which is said to have originated at Prince's Hot Chicken Shack in Nashville, is buttermilk-brined, coated in seasoned flour, and dipped in a fiery cayenne-forward sauce.

Kim spoke with *Check In* about the challenges of opening a restaurant and how they developed their recipe.

Let's talk about Hot Chix. How did you get involved with the concept?

We officially became a business in 2019, before the pandemic. Will was the one who had the idea to bring Nashville-style hot chicken to Boston. It didn't exist here back then. I think some of it was influenced by the fact that I'm from LA, and LA had a hot chicken craze for a long time. Alex was one of my mentors when I was in college. He was with Barbara Lynch's group and their restaurant Sportello at the time. My other partner, Will, has been in the franchise game. We all bring a little bit of a different perspective on how an independent restaurant should be run.

We did pop-ups first, and we were about to sign a lease, and then COVID hit. We ended up not signing that lease—luckily, I think. We continued pop-ups, being residents at different friends' restaurants, including Idle Hour in Quincy and PAGU in Cambridge. They opened their doors to us to let us cook and make money and be able to sustain ourselves through the pandemic. [The success of these pop-ups] instilled a new confidence in us that we should make this concept a brick and mortar. I think Hot Chix is definitely a very polarizing brand for a lot of people. But we kind of like that.

Polarizing how?

In a few ways. Part of it is that we're three Korean dudes serving hot fried chicken—which originated in Southern Black communities—in Massachusetts. The other part of it is the name—people think of it as demeaning, but it's just how we abbreviate chicken in the kitchen. I find that kind of funny, and I think it attests to what we believe restaurants should and can be—they should be fun.

What went into developing the chicken recipe?

It involved a very long trip to Tennessee to eat a lot of hot chicken and a lot of testing. We met the owner of Prince's Hot Chicken Shack in Nashville, which is touted as the original hot chicken restaurant. She had a lot of good words for us and was happy that we were doing something like this up north. Development started in Will's home kitchen using a Dutch oven as a frying vessel.

You've only recently opened, but have there been any challenges you've faced so far?

This is probably across the board in the industry, but labor is the number one issue. Restaurants are tough places to work. The other thing I am worried about is how people are eating now. What is their expectation when they go into a restaurant? We're not super fine dining, but we're not like McDonald's either. When you're in that middle ground, it's kind of hard to meet everybody's expectations. Those are the things that we're pondering as we work on Hot Chix 1.2, 1.3, 1.4. This is the most challenging thing that I've done as an operator, but also the most exciting because the slate seems clear to experiment.

What's the go-to Hot Chix order?

Get a tender plate, hot, and get an order of the biscuits. Make chicken biscuits and supplement with pickles and slaw.

As companies recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic, the hospitality industry has the opportunity to be a part of the solution to systemic issues, such as climate change, work-life balance, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.
Check In asked three executives how the industry can "build back better":

Niren Chaudhary
CEO, PANERA BREAD AND PANERA BRANDS

"With supply chain and labor shortages, inequity in our communities, and the ongoing financial and humanitarian impacts of the global pandemic and of environmental issues driven by the climate crisis, the past several years have challenged us in ways no one could have foreseen. We acknowledge and embrace our responsibility to act in service of our associates, guests, our communities, and the planet. I believe that positive change begins with hospitality leaders taking two key steps. First, understand and measure the impact of your business on all stakeholders—guests, associates, the community, the planet, and shareholders. Use that understanding to not only influence your business decisions but also inspire bold commitments to create positive impacts. Second, begin where you have the greatest influence—with your own associates. Strive to create a team experience that is rooted in respect and focused on associate well-being."

Lisa Lutoff-Perlo
PRESIDENT AND CEO, CELEBRITY CRUISES

"The hospitality industry is traveling a long road to recovery. Among the issues are consumer sentiment, the continuing prevalence of COVID, supply chain issues, and the Great Resignation, where we're seeing employees leave the hospitality industry in large numbers. For the cruise industry, and our company, it is imperative that we shape a compelling narrative around our tremendous environmental efforts to preserve our right to operate freely in all parts of the world; further heighten our focus on diversity and inclusion to globally source and attract employees who continue to deliver our award-winning experience; and continue to monitor and take a pulse on our employees' work-life balance and mental health, both of which have been impacted to a very large degree during these past two years."

Bashar Wali
FOUNDER AND CEO, THIS ASSEMBLY AND PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

"In hospitality, we work while others celebrate. It's a life we accept—weekends, holidays, brunch, they're mandatory but lucrative. For many of us, it's also the reason we got into this business: to create memories for others. The toll it takes isn't small, especially as the years stack up like tickets on a spike. As our teams start to build families of their own, working that Thanksgiving double shift isn't nearly as appealing. What does balance look like? Is there a world where hours are shorter, a holiday or two is closed, and the expectation is different? If we're going to build back better, it's all on the table. Of the individuals who were a part of the pandemic's Great Resignation, 82 percent were hospitality workers, tired of the *work all the time and don't ask questions* mentality. So, I'm finding the way. I'm more vocal about encouraging team members to take an extra day off. We're shifting our focus from hours to productivity. Working smarter, not harder. We need to change the culture—the long game. And if we want our teams in it for the long game, it all starts with changing our short one."

Valuing the *human* touch

By Louise Kennedy

"Hospitality is all about the people and the experiences," says Dana Waud Floberg (CGS'05, SHA'07). That's something she learned in one of her first classes, with her "greatly missed" professor Mike Oshins (Wheelock'02), who died of pancreatic cancer in 2019.

For one assignment, Oshins, an associate professor of the practice, had the students write letters to two different companies, one about a positive customer experience and one negative. "I wrote a negative review to Six Flags," Floberg says, because she couldn't get an online ticket purchase to go through. The response thrilled her: four free tickets to the amusement park. "It really drew my attention to how important customer service is. Even bad experiences can leave a good impression on you, depending on how they're handled."

That's one lesson she hopes students will learn—and it's one, like many others, that she believes is best learned through actual interactions in the world, beyond reading assignments or class lectures.

"The students who are going to go far are the ones who know they're dealing with humans, not products," says Floberg, who is vice chair of the dean's advisory board and a former director at the hospitality consulting firm HVS. So when she was considering ways to give back to the school, she decided to support something outside of class: students' participation in industry conferences. "Just being at those conferences and talking with the people who've had those experiences—I think that's more valuable than anything else I could fund."

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