

Influential Women IN HOSPITALITY

26 ◀ SPECIAL REPORT

HOTELMANAGEMENT.NET | OCTOBER 2023



JOY JOLIN
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
ASSET MANAGEMENT
RLJ LODGING TRUST

Jolin found that the service industry provided variety and the opportunity to learn new skills, starting her foray into service as a fast-food employee. Once she graduated from Mercyhurst University with a B.A. in hospitality, "I found myself attracted to the same things in my career. The chance to continue to hone new skills and never have two days that are the same."

Fourteen years ago, Jolin moved from operations to the real estate side of the business and again found new opportunities to learn and drive performance. "One of the best parts of my job is the opportunity to partner with management companies and drive results within our hotels. Holding people accountable for improving financials through revenue strategies, ROIs or cost containment is a delicate balance. It is something that provides constant change and evolution."

However, being a woman in a male-dominated industry, she shared that "I have to continually make myself uncomfortable, to be heard and have my ideas shared. Finding that balance of holding on to the leader that I am while adopting qualities that allow me to be seen on par with my peers has been important."

Jolin said that encouraging the next generation of women in hospitality is critical. "Mentoring at the University of Denver has been personally and professionally fulfilling. Having the opportunity to offer guidance to young women as they find their way in the hospitality industry has been a highlight of the last few years of my career."



EMILY KEIP
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
DESIGN SERVICES, AMERICAS
HYATT HOTELS CORP.

Keip got her first taste of hospitality while working at an architecture firm, designing bars and restaurants as well as residences. "The opportunity to combine these two disciplines came at Hyatt and I couldn't resist," she recalled.

In her role, Keip collaborates with owners, developers and operational partners to work through goals and programming for the hotel projects they collectively are trying to create or renovate. "I might give a presentation describing the personality and aesthetics of one of Hyatt's brands, then get to work with talented architects and interior designers to see how they will bring that personality to life. My team reviews and collaborates on design for the Americas region and we also spend quite a bit of time together working as a studio to solve the design challenges that come up in every project."

The best part of her job is "being able to help solve an issue on the design side, then seeing the final result realized in a spectacular hotel that is activated by guests."

Over the course of her career, Keip has worked with some notable women mentors who taught her to lead and never apologize for being a professional woman. "I love seeing more and more women getting important roles and holding their own in this industry. Don't be afraid to listen first and respond to challenges with real empathy. So many people rush to talk, and listening is important too."

With that in mind, Keip views leadership as a combination of guidance and trust—"the ability to stand up for your ideas and the humility to change your mind."



GRETA KIPP
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
MAIN STREET HOSPITALITY

Kipp worked as the director of rooms at a Virginia Beach Holiday Inn & Suites while going to graduate school for economics. "Soon the two began to blur as I started seeking ways to apply economic principles to my work. I love examining everything as a puzzle. Eventually I stopped searching for my 'real job' and dove headfirst into hotel management as a career. The most enticing aspect of the industry is how complicated it can be as a puzzle to figure out."

As Kipp's career flourished, she recognized the importance of confidence and playing to her strengths. "There have been moments where my confidence wavered because I was younger and less experienced than the people I was managing," she shared, and admits that, as an Army veteran, she struggled in some workplace cultures "because I was used

to a very different style of directing work. My wins often stem from being confident in technology, which is an area of the industry that continues to have less representation by women. The most satisfying thing is to learn that something I have created or taught someone has had a meaningful impact. Occasionally, the systems I implement are met with skepticism or outright obstinance. Those are the best situations to come back to and discover that it's working better than ever before."

Measuring success is not an exact science for Kipp, though she has a unique lens for identifying it. "I love the Japanese term 'kaizen'—pure improvement: everyone, everywhere, every day. Incremental and cumulative. It's difficult to measure, but you know when it's happening and when it's not."



SARAH KOUSTRUP
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL
HOSPITALITY SERVICES

Koustrup said she has always approached her position within the organization she works for and in the hospitality industry overall "with the goal of being a great hotelier and leader, period, not because I am a woman or despite being a woman. No matter who I am talking to or in what setting, my skills and experience are the only thing that matters."

Koustrup joined National Hospitality Services in 2012 as the director of human resources, and she started the department from scratch. "In those early days I was given the opportunity to shadow every role in the organization from general manager to housekeeper, working alongside the team and learning about their role and the industry. Being an HR professional, the people aspect of the business was thrilling, and seeing how every team member worked together to provide a guest with a great

experience that in turn supported an owner reaching their goals clicked instantly, and I was hooked."

She credits her business partner, mentor and industry veteran, Norman Leslie, with helping pave the way for her professional development, providing projects and opportunities outside of HR to grow her skill set.

"As women continue to be elevated, the value of diverse organizations with women in leadership roles are becoming visible and important. I will never forget how lucky I was to have had someone to see me for my skills versus my gender. I am always seeking ways to help mentor and advocate for women currently in or considering the hospitality industry."



CHRISTINE M. MAGRANN
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF
OPERATING OFFICER
MAKEREADY

Though Magrann is now the president/CEO of MakeReady—a hotel, restaurant and retail "place maker" that specializes in branding, design and operations—she began her hospitality career as a restaurant dishwasher, noting that her interest in the industry was sparked by the art of hospitality and how it creates the power of community. "Entertaining has always held a special place in my heart, both personally and professionally. Seeing the joy on people's faces when they come together to enjoy great food, music and each other's company is truly magical."

Magrann credits her success in part to the power of her professional community. "I have been fortunate to work alongside strong leaders who pushed me to my fullest potential and propelled me towards the next level."

In an industry where "male-dominating cultures prevail," she said she thrived thanks to her "determination to listen to mentors" and to her ability to be open-minded. "By building a robust network of support, I was able to excel as a leader."

While success can be measured in a multitude of ways, Magrann credits the adventure, not just the destination. "I believe success is not only about achieving targets or reaching milestones, it's also about the journey we take to get there. I see success in the relationships we build with our team members, guests and partners, the innovative ideas we implement and the positive impact we make on the communities we serve."