

THURSDAY CAREERS CHATS

Date of Session: 11-3-11 Title of Session: Hospitality Careers

Alumni Presenter: Jon Kimball Class Year: _____

Title: General Manager Employer: Westin St. Francis

Notes from Session:

Hospitality Field

- There are five sections within hospitality: Rooms, Food and Beverage, Sales, Accounting, HR
- Many people enter the industry through Corporate as well, and also Development, Legal, and Union
- Hospitality has gone from being lots of brands to a massive consolidation (i.e. Starwood has brands including Westin, Sheraton, 4 pts by Sheraton, W, St. Regis, Aloft, Element)
- Structure
 - o Some hotels owned and operated independently
 - o Many hotels are owned by real estate owners and hired out by brand to run the operations.
 - o Some hotels are franchises (pay a fee to license the hotel brand name), you own and run the building but pay for the name and reservation system

His Background (very traditional)

- Always enjoyed producing events – social, shows, etc. is how he knew he wanted to get into the business
- Started as a Management Trainee at Westin St. Francis in '84
- Began in Food and Beverage, worked his way up through restaurants, then worked in the catering side of things (clients, booking, execution), then served as the Catering Manager and then the Director of Catering
- He also worked for Hyatt and Four Seasons in catering, then the Director of Food and Beverage
- He moved back to Westin in LA as the Hotel Manager, then transitioned to the General Manager of Westin Airport. Moved to North Carolina to serve as the Opening Manager of a brand new hotel in Charlotte, and then finally transitioned to the General Manager of the Westin St. Francis and an additional role of Area Managing Director (oversees 8 bay-area hotels).
- Need to be flexible with regard to movement in the industry. There is typically a lot of movement in hospitality!

Employment

- Westin, Sheratons, St. Regis and W take management trainees (8-12 months, commit to a specific area of focus then work in all various depts., as well as other non-core depts, then start assuming junior management role and can turn potentially more into management position)
- Starwood does most recruiting at hospitality-related colleges
- Most popular avenue is Rooms, Food and Beverage
- There are summer intern programs (a good way to explore the business) - consider hotels that are busy in the summer (resorts, major cities).
- Consider a 2-week externship in January, to get a taste of the industry
- Check out Starwood Jobs to get an idea of the positions and hotels
- Desired skills include: Leadership, Team player, Good attitude, Basics (like accounting or business-related courses. Core skills can be trained.
- Liberal arts students come with a broader perspective vs. narrow view from hotel management college. Perhaps liberal arts students should consider ultimately getting a masters in hotel management.

His Job

- Starts at 7am by walking the hotel: interacting with guests and associates; talking to overnight team; meeting with security, accounting, sales; entire management team meetings every morning; a lot of client interaction (selling hotel); a lot of organizing for next meeting – hotel team, civic organization, etc. It's like running a small town.
- Learns a lot about lots of industries because of all the conferences the hotel hosts
- Meets a lot of unique people
- A lot of movement in his day, often stays into the evening
- Can have a balanced work/home life, but it's not as traditional. Need to be very organized to have the balance.
- Challenges: Very fast-paced, 24 hour "nutsy" job, have to like that kind of environment – he's always on call; Only as good as your team