

BOUTIQUE design

HOSPITALITY REINVENTED

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POWER PLAYERS

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BOUTIQUE DESIGN'S 2018 WOMEN LEADERS

BRAIN TRUST

What's next for hospitality design? How will the economy fare? What can studio heads do to stop the brain drain that's bleeding talent from this industry?

On the following pages, *Boutique Design's* 2018 Power Players: Women Leaders in Hospitality share their insights and success strategies for the year ahead.

BY MARY SCOVIAK

THOUGH THE 12 executives being honored as role models see the hospitality design world's challenges and opportunities through different filters, they're not forecasting any big bumps in the road. No one's predicting a slow-down in consolidation or in the launch of additional brands. The rationale for the latter point: No brand can be one-concept-fits-all at a time when consumers mix and match their preferred hotels depending on the purpose of their trip or their mood of the day. Travelers will continue to seek the "exact" property to satisfy their appetite for a surprise-me experience when they're on vacation or a "don't even make me think about where the light switch" mandate when they travel on business. The answer on whether there's room for the giants and the up-and-comers was a resounding, "yes."

They all stressed the increasing importance of wellbeing as a design driver. Design firms that want to make owners' short lists need to start thinking beyond a little wheat grass here and there to how to actually promote good health with in-room mirror-length screens that stream workouts or find cool bathroom fixtures that work for travelers with mobility issues without sacrificing style. And, they offer best-practice life hacks for staying grounded, trying to find that illusive work/life balance everybody's supposed to want and how they're giving back.

To find out more, get clued in by these influential thought leaders.

2018 BDwest Women Leaders

- Mari Balestrazzi, vice president, Americas design services, Hyatt Hotels Corp.
- Pamela Babey, principal, BAMO
- Sue Firestone, chairman and founder, SFA Design
- Dana Kalczak, vice president, design, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts
- Simone Mayer, chief executive officer & chief creative officer, FOH
- Anu Saxena, senior vice president & global head for Hilton Supply Management (HSM); president of Hilton's Global Group Purchasing Organization

2018 BDNY Women Leaders

- Glyn Aepfel, president and chief executive officer, Glencove Capital
- Cindy Andrews, president, Sunbrite Outdoor Furniture
- Beth Campbell, chief executive officer, Wilson Associates
- Julia Monk, senior principal and director of hospitality design, HOK
- Rachel Rangelov, senior vice president, design and construction, Longview Senior Housing Advisors
- Teri Urovsky, vice president, design and project management, Classic Full-service Brands, Marriott Intl.



PAMELA BABEY

PRINCIPAL, BAMO

WHAT SHE WISHES EVERY CLIENT UNDERSTOOD ABOUT THE DESIGN FIRM'S ROLE:

Generally, the client thinks the design just pops out, in reality there needs to be "thinking time" and ruminating. A rendering is not the first tool and not the best tool, it is not an end, it is part of the process. Then there needs to be trust. I think the reasons there is a disconnect is: 1) if the construction documents are not by the designer, 2) the designer is not well trained, 3) the process must be defined and followed, there really are not shortcuts. Shortcuts lead to problems, I have tried many! There are many steps from beginning to end; there is design involved in all phases of a project. A weak result is often the consequence of cutting the designer out of the project at DD or even schematic. Remember the phrase "God is in the details"? Well, design is in the details. Details are not a mechanical effort, they are intrinsic to the final product. Follow-through is essential.

ONE DESIGN HEADLINE SHE'D LOVE TO SEE IN 2019:

I pray the headline is..... NOTHING IS BEIGE! I think beige is a sign of timidity or lack of confidence, it is the high point of the "sameness" of hotel design. I don't think design sameness is luxury. Going back to your earlier question, luxury pares down the interior to what you need and adds a delicate flavor of what you enjoy, set in a scenario that the owner and the entire team believe in. Schrage believed in Starck; he was determined to



move design to a different place. It happened because there was a team that believed in their approach! A revolution at the time. What is it that makes a luxury hotel? It is like a woman who is secure, knows her style, she walks into a room and there is a hush of confidence. When one walks into a luxury hotel lobby, they feel special, relaxed and as if they are the only guest, it is not just decor, it is an attitude of service and style.

WHAT CLIENT-LED INNOVATION SHE DREAMS OF:

I am waiting for someone who sees the big picture and wants to look at the hotel module in a new way. Something like a new view on room proportion, not how tricky can you be, but how you can look at the functionality of the space in a new way. I am not interested in new for its own sake, but how to make the experience better.

HOW SHE STAYS GROUNDED:

I have never felt that I am in the clients' world, that would be a big mistake. I am providing a service, creating an interior for them, not for my own satisfaction or even for my portfolio. I expand my own horizons by visual exploration, I want to see and feel and read (mostly captions) things. For me, I must be educated about the client, and a good client also challenges me along the way ensuring that this is his or her space.

WHY UNCERTAINTY IS THE BANE OF GREAT DESIGN:

I have butterflies still when I meet with the client, the hardest part of a project is when you don't meet with the client and there are people second-guessing what the "boss" might like. This usually stifles all creativity.

HOW SHE MAKES SURE HER TEAM SEES HER AS CO-FOUNDER OF A FIRM WITH DESIGN AND MORAL INTEGRITY, NOT "THE BOSS LADY":

I want my team to understand the elements, the reasoning; our job is a serious endeavor. The bottom line is not so large for the talent and the effort involved. Maybe if I were off on holiday junkets and never with my team, they might feel they are paying the airfare! I hope I inspire the team to create and enjoy, and to understand that as a principal there are "parts of the job" that may look glamorous but really are "work" too. That's paid off in staff retention; principal Anne Wilkinson was the company's first hire in the early 1990s.

HER CONTROVERSIAL TAKE ON ONE OVERUSED BUZZWORD:

I am already weary of the "wellness" factor, it is another word tossed around by many, with no real conviction.

WHAT SHE DOES TO RECHARGE:

Complaining only lasts for a while... then move on. Look at a lovely book (NOT Pinterest or the like), pick up something pretty; *Chic Stays* or *May I Come In?*, and find yourself in another state of mind, breath, and begin again.

HER PET DESIGN PEEVES:

I think finishes and coatings on materials is a bad thing, for health and other reasons. I prefer natural materials taken care of in natural ways. Interior material costs increase every year, as do building materials and so the budgets for projects must increase to support design integrity. We have to be champions of our industry and peers, instead of "knocking off" the items we love.