

Women of Hospitality Technology

Profiles of the industry's notable and
influential female IT executives



Margaret Ady



Juli Barter



Gabriela Bratkovichs



Anita Chan



Robin Deyo



Tammy Farley



Sarah Fults

Two factors stand out when you characterize the female professionals working in hospitality technology. One is their passion for hospitality and second, their affinity for the technical. From there their paths diverge. What follows is a perspective of the leading women who are shaping the industry. They encompass a diverse range of specialties: heading companies that offer innovative solutions, overseeing hotel organizations' IT strategies, educating and informing on the latest tech trends. All are working to leverage technology to propel the industry forward. Read on to learn of the paths these women have taken to fill the influential positions they hold today.

*This is the second Women of Hospitality Technology feature.
Read the first, published in 2014, on PineappleSearch.com.*



Jennifer Green



Dayna Kully



Kelly MacPherson



Shannon McCallum



Keryn McNamara



Tammy Peter



Geneva Rinehart



Iris Steinmetz



Suzy Treece



Heide Werthamer



Margaret Ady

Building the next generation of property management systems

Co-founder and CMO • apaleo
Munich, Germany



Margaret Ady is here to help. She is currently working on developing the unified theory of hotel technology — or at least trying to champion the next generation of property management system (PMS), which makes it possible.

"For too long, hoteliers have worked with PMS that can't connect to the dozens of other systems that they are working with," says Margaret. "New PMS that can connect to any and all tools that the hotel wants to use will completely change the hotel business. And, as long as that connection piece (*read: API-first platform with open, well-documented and easy to work with APIs*) is there, it doesn't matter what kind of new technology comes down the pipeline — the hotel will be able to use it immediately."

Margaret is like a hospitality superhero from an alternate career-path planet. After graduating from the University of Southern California (studying economics and psychology) she became a research analyst for television media companies, first for Fox Entertainment Group, then Walt Disney. While there she used technology to analyze habits and trends of television viewers — even developing her own proprietary technology to automate reporting, saving her team time to use on for more critical tasks. After rising to the level of manager in the research departments of Disney and OWN, Margaret decided she could help more businesses with

"Planning is great and all, but very rarely do things go exactly according to your plans. So rather than spend all your time and effort planning your next steps, your company strategy, your team's next moves, etc., jump in and start doing! Then evaluate, optimize and refine as you go."

her marketing research expertise as a consultant. This is where the paths crossed for her career and hospitality technology. "I was introduced to a hospitality tech company, which eventually offered me a job. It was only after I took the job that I began to realize how complex and nuanced the hospitality tech industry actually is."

Becoming vice president of marketing for TrustYou, Margaret became acquainted with the challenges hotels face in managing the multiple technology fronts in which they need to interface. "There are so many different systems that must work together for a hotel's business to run smoothly. Because of this, hotels are extremely reluctant to change core systems, even if they are completely outdated... New tech providers like apaleo are finally jumping in

to make change painless, presenting a seismic shift in how hotels approach their tech strategy. Helping hotels move towards a tech-friendly future is great fun."

Getting people to the point where they understand the need for platform upgrades is Margaret's superpower. Where once she persuaded the decision makers at giant media companies to upgrade their technology, she is now convincing hotel clients for apaleo. "The right technology can cut costs, improve operations, lead to clearer business strategies, make the lives of hotel staff easier and improve the guest experience."

Her power as a knowledgeable, authoritative voice was not as strong for Margaret early in her career. As a woman, she found it hard to be heard. And even though she is now looked to as an expert, she sees that today women still have to fight harder to prove themselves. Margaret realizes that it is going to take more than a strong will to change attitudes and level the playing field. Rather, the industry needs more women to join the field and move into leadership positions. Understanding this, Margaret has taken this idea outside of the workplace. She mentors girls and teens, tutoring them in math and science; perhaps ushering in a new generation of leaders. ✨



Juli Barter

Providing integrated hospitality credit card processing solutions

Director of Client Relations • POST Integrations, Inc.
Pompano Beach, Florida USA



It wasn't always in the cards for Juli Barter. Sure, she now is director of client relations for POST Integrations, which provides comprehensive, integrated credit card processing solutions exclusively to the hospitality industry. But how she arrived to this point was by happenstance.

A job out of college landed her at a Cadillac dealership in Dundee, Illinois, about an hour northwest of Chicago. There, she worked in finance, after studying business administration. Seven years in, Barter was almost convinced that the automobile industry would be where she would park her career.

But in 1991, a former boss asked Barter if she would be interested in a controller position at a country club where he was the treasurer. She accepted, and the hospitality industry has been coursing through her veins ever since. Once established in her new role, Barter instantly felt that the hospitality industry had been part of her DNA all along — she had just brought it to the surface.

For the next 19 years, Barter held financial positions at various country clubs, eventually becoming CFO at St. Andrews Country Club in Boca Raton, Florida. In her role, she had oversight over the club's IT department and says it was then that she began to gravitate toward the technology side.

For the entirety of her career, Barter worked on property. That changed in 2010, when she joined POST Integrations — her first taste of working on the supplier side of the hospitality business. It's a job she has embraced, where her responsibilities are many and varied, in a segment of

“Once you are in the hospitality industry you know right away if it is a good fit or not. I fell in love with the industry, as it feels part of my DNA.”

the industry that has drawn recent scrutiny in light of security breaches that have impacted some of the largest hotel companies in the world. One of her responsibilities is providing education to clients on topics ranging from fraud and loss prevention to understanding data security.

It's a role she relishes and for a company she values and admires, not only for its successes, but for its composition. Men have had a majority of the top jobs in the hospitality industry, and it's been even more prevalent

in the technology sector. Early in her career as a club finance professional, Barter recalls dealing with a male-dominated board of directors, who were slow to include her into their circle. She stayed motivated, and now confidently says that, “Once they realized my knowledge and capability, they were more accepting.”

At POST, both the president/CEO and COO are women. The former, Mary Gerdts, was a mentor to Barter early in her career before joining POST, offering sage advice and guidance. She once told Barter that technical skill can be learned, but to succeed in the hospitality industry you have to combine that knowledge with relationship building and outstanding customer service.

Barter practices that every day, working with clients and technology providers to assist in resolving any and all system challenges.

In an industry where customer privacy and protection are paramount, managing credit card processes can be an anxious, stressful job. To cope, Barter takes hot yoga classes and tries to spend more time on the water with her husband, at their home in Pompano Beach, Fla. Because in order to provide top technology care and service, sometimes you have to unplug. ✨

Gabriela Bratkovics

Maximizing the benefits of technology by giving employees world-class training

Co-founder and CFO • ENG Infotech Corp.
Fairfield, New Jersey USA



Gabriela Bratkovics was drawn to the technology field in college, where she minored in computer science at the same time she was studying for a masters in finance. And later, after attending her first HITEC, she realized how different and creative the industry is, and knew hospitality was the field for her. “My favorite part is definitely the people and traveling to conferences around the world, which gives me the opportunity to understand other cultures and true hospitality,” Gabriela says.

As the co-founder and CFO of ENG Infotech, she has combined both her specialties in a business that provides world class training that enhances technology performance. Through cost studies, she determines the best placement of technical resources and optimal direction of the business.

Early in her career, a challenge to Gabriela was that she felt she did not have enough time to comprehensively learn all the different applications available and retain all the related knowledge. Now she sees her biggest challenge is employee training, which she believes enhances employee engagement and brand loyalty. “An employee that is trained properly understands how to maximize the guest experience and in return it creates job satisfaction,” Gabriela says.

She also sees a challenge in being a woman in a male-dominated industry. When she first entered the hospitality field, she felt women were not expected to understand different technologies. But that is changing. Now she sees men paying attention to women in the field because they bring a different perspective.

“My biggest challenge now is most companies don’t realize that training enhances employee engagement and brand loyalty. An employee that is trained properly understands how to maximize the guest experience, and in return it creates job satisfaction.”

Gabriela recalls an experience in her career that improved her ability to define a solution and make the right decision. She was working on a project to refresh a client’s sales and catering software, and was faced with a lack of ambivalence from the client team. She met with the senior vice president and told him that if he didn’t sign off on the project that day, the deadline would not be met. She did this by presenting facts and defining a

clear solution to meet their goals. The client was able to make the decision at that moment, enabling the project to move forward.

Gabriela credits teamwork as a key ingredient to achieving success on a project. She provides an example of when she worked with a team on a PMS training project. Due to lack of participation from the hotel staff, the first installation went poorly. This created a cascading effect for the properties that were lined up for training. By leveraging the critical thinking of her team, an idea emerged: create a champion from the hotel staff for each site going forward. The champion would prepare the site for installation and explain the “why” behind the new PMS and the benefits it would bring.

As she looks to future technology developments, Gabriela is most interested in the expansion of technology capabilities within the hotel loyalty platform to create a personalized guest experience.

In her personal life, Gabriela is passionate about keeping honeybees in the ecosystem, and owns four beehives. She also has a black belt in Tae-Kwon-Do which instills determination. “Don’t be scared to fail,” Gabriela says. “Every failure is a lesson.” ✨



Anita Chan

Forging innovative alliances between Chinese and Western travel markets

CEO • Compass Edge Ltd
Hong Kong



Being on the leading edge of digital trends requires expertise and lots of enthusiasm for “what comes next.” Both of those traits are what have pushed Anita Chan to the top of digital marketing in the hospitality industry. At Compass Edge, she is bridging the West with China digitally with GO CHINA — providing independent hotels with strategies to capture the growing Chinese outbound tourist market.

Recognizing opportunities is the key to her success. Her father had hopes of Anita becoming an investment banker, but the summer between high school and university she took a customer relations job at a hotel and discovered that hospitality was her calling. “As a person who loves to travel and explore the world, it was a logical choice to develop my career in this industry.” She learned the ropes of marketing at the head offices of Four Seasons Hotels. When an opportunity arose to join a digital department at Delta Hotels & Resorts as manager in global distribution marketing, she jumped on it. “I am from the generation when the World Wide Web got its start, with excitement centering around websites, digital solutions, etc. I always like to learn the newest and latest.”

Anita continued her path through the technology side of the hospitality industry with VIP International (later named VANTIS), then the second largest reservation service provider worldwide. She rose from director of marketing to vice president, while also earning an MBA from the Ivey Business School at the University of Western Ontario. She set up the Hong Kong operations for VANTIS and grew their Asia Pacific memberships

“The challenge to capturing the Chinese digital market is for Western businesses to recognize and accept that the Chinese ecosystem is different, and a different strategy is needed to be successful in China.”

from two hotels to over 150 properties in more than 10 countries. As the demand for entry in the Asian hospitality market grew, the need for adept and agile operators turned into multiple opportunities for Anita. First serving as vice president to manage the Open World Ltd’s offices in Singapore, Shanghai and Colombo, Sri Lanka and eventually managing their global sales and marketing team, she then became North Asia regional director for Orbitz Worldwide — and after that, vice president of development, Asia Pacific for Small Luxury Hotels of the World.

Now at Compass Edge, she has transformed the company from a CRS reseller to a business that provides online and marketing distribution services

and a China-ready strategy for independent hotels. “Looking back, I think one good decision I made was to look at what was up and coming at the time, look at the company’s capabilities and transform the team so that we all are China experts.”

Most recently, Anita co-founded the LN Global Alliance, the first Chinese-centric loyalty program that joins three public Chinese companies with Compass Edge to form an organization with 46+ million loyalty members. She asked, “How can independent hotels from the West get into a cost-effective loyalty program with a ready pool of Chinese travelers?... For those who know China, this is almost impossible to get done.” And so in 2018, she formed the Alliance.

All these efforts have paid off, as Compass Edge has just received the CTW Silver Award in Product Innovation at ITB China. An honor awarded by a jury of Chinese tourism experts and considered as the most important award for the international, Chinese outbound tourism market.

As one who is constantly looking to see technology as a means to capture a market, Anita is most excited about the development of big data and AI’s ability to customize travelers’ experiences as “the most interesting technology developments for Chinese travelers in the near future.” *

Robin Deyo

Digital groundbreaker whose secret to success is listening closely all around to fuel the next evolution

Co-founder and Enterprise Business Officer • Cendyn
Boca Raton, Florida USA



Robin Deyo is not unlike many whose livelihood comes from the hospitality industry. She caught the itch early on. Robin, with her husband Charles, founded Cendyn, a technology company focused on driving sales and marketing performance for hotels, more than 20 years ago. Arriving at that point was inevitable for Robin, who at a young age decided that the hospitality industry would be her calling.

She got the bug on a family trip to Hilton Head, South Carolina, over dinner at the Hyatt Regency. Something at the hotel struck her, and a light went off: This would be a great place to work, she thought.

Literally. After graduating from Appalachian State University, Robin took a job as a front desk clerk and was later promoted to sales manager at the Hyatt Regency Hilton Head — that dinner having an indelible impact.

Further sales positions ensued before she and her husband founded Cendyn at a propitious time in human history. Though the Internet's roots stretch back to the 1980s, it wasn't until the mid-'90s that people started to recognize its enduring impact on how business could be done. Robin and her husband had the vision to see how it would influence the way business gets done in hotels.

With thousands of clients today, the Deyos' foresight has paid off. Cendyn offers a suite of products — all focused on generating revenue for hotels and engagement with customers.

Seeing an opportunity in the space was prescient, but along the way, Robin notes her tribulations coming up the sales ranks in what she alludes

“Listen. Listen to your best customers, listen to your less frequent users, listen to your product development teams and listen to your gut. Each will provide the rocket fuel for the next evolution.”

to as a “boys club” era. The industry is less patriarchal today and, as a technology company, Cendyn is embracing women in the space. Its blog, for instance, ran a series called “Women Who Code” that profiled some of the numerous women who write code for the company.

Being a woman is less an obstacle in the hospitality industry today; instead, challenges come in the form of embracing the current wave of technology and integrating these into their products. And according to Rob-

in, artificial intelligence is the next wave of technology in the hospitality space to crest. AI, she says, has unlimited potential to change the way hotels and hotel companies interact with guests, but like any true hospitality professional, Robin understands that hotels will always be a people business. The challenge will be how to harness the technology to improve the guest experience, while maintaining the human component. It's something Cendyn is hard at work unlocking.

As a hospitality professional going on 30-plus years, Robin has soaked in advice and passed off her own. While living in a digital age, for instance, Robin still goes analog for meetings with clients or prospective ones, carrying a notepad to log key points and follow-up items. It's a tactic provided by one of her early mentors. Her own piece of advice for running an IT company in a field that is constantly evolving: “Listen. Listen to your best customers, listen to your less frequent users, listen to your product development teams and listen to your gut. Each will provide the rocket fuel for the next evolution.”

For a digital dynamo, it's an old-school mentality that shows that hospitality technology is still, in fact, a people business. ✨



Tammy Farley

A champion of profit-optimizing analytics with compassion at her core

Co-founder • The Rainmaker Group
HFTP Hospitality Technology Hall of Fame Inductee
Alpharetta, Georgia USA



When Tammy Farley looks back on her path to success it's not like she had it all mapped out, "I just somehow ended up here!" But step by step, her natural entrepreneurial instincts never let her take a wrong turn and even if she couldn't always see the road she was on, there were signs along the way.

Straight out of the University of Michigan, Tammy was marketing technology. "I was an outside salesperson selling business telephone systems." She carried a ginormous suitcase with two demo telephones to display, "Two so that you could demonstrate the intercom feature!" A strong foreshadowing of her future success in pioneering technology that brings professionals together. "My background is sales and marketing, 25 years selling technology, but without a doubt my favorite part is the wonderful people that serve the industry."

Tammy's analytic instincts, combined with her passion for building professional relationships around solving problems is what has made her and her company, the Rainmaker Group, industry leaders in profit optimizing analytic technology. "So many times I'm working closely with teams of folks to be sure things are on the right track. Anytime I hear about significant issues with a customer, I pull the appropriate people together to make sure we do all we can to resolve the issue and keep the customer satisfied."

To do that Tammy is constantly reaching out, speaking to customers and bringing experts to the table. The ever-changing technological landscape presents the kinds of challenges Tammy's skill set is designed to resolve. "The thing that matters most to us is data security and disaster

"Do what you love. We spend so much of our life working, if you don't love it, it's not worth it — it's not about the money, it's about the passion."

recovery preparedness. We've been certified through a SOC compliance process and have implemented those procedures in the hospitality business." But more than that, Tammy is thinking past the current standard and is always strategizing about the next level. "To me, it's not necessarily about new technology developments per se, I think it's more about who emerges as the clear leaders in hotel technology."

"I think the fast pace at which things are changing, it can be really easy to get caught up in the latest tech only to find it is totally irrelevant to our

business," she states. Tammy's industry analysis is comprehensive, displaying a grasp that goes deeper than the latest technology headlines. "We are constantly challenged by customers and prospects, and have to be candid about why we choose to pursue the things we do and why we don't pursue others, and at the end of the day our track record speaks for itself."

Tammy's success in a male-dominated business environment has placed her in an outlier position, "I realize in some ways we have come so far, and in other ways we have made such little progress. I was on the planning committee for a conference and we were trying to find a female, C-level executive in hospitality as a speaker. How small the list is. But many women work in the industry, so we have to make sure they get the same opportunities at the top as their male counterparts."

Her professional achievement and dedication reflect Tammy's commitment to solving problems. Her devotion to family and her steadfast charity work has only galvanized her personal belief, "Do what you love! We spend so much of our life working, if you don't love it, it's not worth it. It's not about the money, it's about the passion. ✨"

Sarah Fults

Hotel distribution and technology executive

Vice President, Distribution • MGM Resorts International
Las Vegas, Nevada USA



At her home in Las Vegas, a city of fortune or forlorn, depending on your luck, Sarah Fults keeps a peculiar memento as a reminder that success has more to do with perseverance than luck: it is a check that bounced years ago.

Fults is currently the vice president of distribution at gaming monolith MGM Resorts International, but her background is more bootstrap, having worked at several startups in a career that has included stops at Loews Hotels and Choice Hotels.

It was at one of those early startups where one of her paychecks did not have the cash to back it — something jarring if you have to make a car payment, but also transformational, Sarah admits. It was a reminder of the grind it takes to run a fledgling company and the responsibility that comes with that. The bounced check, a result not of neglect, but circumstance, also serves as a reminder of leadership: the owner, figuratively, sold the shirt off his back that day to ensure Sarah received her pay.

Sarah's paychecks do not bounce today, in part because part of her job is to reduce operational expenses by lowering the cost of customer acquisition. From managing an OTA and GDS strategy to implementing central reservations systems, Sarah has been on the forefront of the hospitality industry's byzantine distribution game, where profit margins are won or lost on the turn of a percentage point.

Her first taste of the hospitality industry came while working in reservations at Gardiner's Resort on Camelback in Scottsdale, Arizona. It was also there that Sarah found her career calling. Serendipitously, the resort was in

"You see a lot of right and wrong and good and bad in your career, but staying humble and doing the right thing every day is a choice that is yours to live by."

the midst of installing a new property management system and Sarah was asked to test the system and locate any bugs. The company that supplied the PMS, Anasazi, later purchased by Pegasus Solutions, found Sarah's feedback indispensable and offered her a job in quality assurance, which she accepted.

As back then, Sarah still finds integration her greatest challenge, making new technology jibe with the old. And while she is excited at the prospects of new tech, including AI and voice, Sarah shows most excitement over the "smart

hotel," where rooms, for instance, will conform to guests' tastes. As an avid traveler herself, Sarah relishes the future of personalization and the way it will transform and propel the customer experience.

Driving hospitality distribution onward is part of Sarah's current work. When she isn't busy building strategies to optimize revenue at MGM, Sarah helps guide and shape the distribution conversation as president of the Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association (HEDNA). She has been in her current role at the not-for-profit organization since 2016, having sat on its board of directors prior. HEDNA's mission is to simplify hospitality distribution to drive the business of hospitality forward.

The field of hospitality technology has historically been male-dominated; that is changing, but Sarah, a 24-year industry veteran, has never let it affect her. She did that by being assertive in order to be heard, but not so assertive as to sound offensive. Today, her biggest protestation is pay inequality, a persistent issue across industries which she finds inexplicable in this day and age.

Her advice for women just starting in hospitality: Be confident, learn from everyone, believe in yourself and know that you deserve to have a seat at the table. ✨



Jennifer Green

Hotel technology professional who evaluates, deploys and manages guest-centric technology

Product Director • Hyatt Hotels
Chicago, Illinois USA



Jennifer Green fell into hospitality by accident. She had a long finance-focused career working for a Fortune 50 financial services company, when she was brought in to develop an operations solution using technology with little background knowledge. She had to learn it from the ground up. Shifting industries, an opportunity came up with hotel technology at Hyatt and she jumped at the chance to do something completely different, but with a well-respected and renowned brand.

Her favorite part is the tactile nature of the business. “I used to work on projects and strategic initiatives that you could never see, feel or touch,” Jennifer says. “Now I can visit hotels the world over and see the work and energy spent every day come to life for our guests.”

Early in her career, she was challenged by a lack of knowledge of solutions we take for granted today, such as cloud hosting, big data, IoT and network communications. Now she feels the biggest challenge is not the technology itself, but how to articulate why you are doing something and the value it provides.

“I like to challenge the prevailing thought patterns and avoiding decisions being made based on a survey of one (e.g., just because one person thinks or experiences something, doesn’t make it true for all),” Jennifer says. “My favorite question to ask is ‘why?’”

Jennifer’s position with Hyatt involves the deployment of guest internet access. She is fascinated by how networking is developing and evolving. “I think HotSpot 2.0 and the promise of 5G are really important to watch,” Jen-

“What I discovered I really liked [about technology], though, was this was a discipline that not only taught you how to solve problems, but how to approach problem solving.”

nifer says. “People are asking how we help them be more secure in a connected world and how we can service them more seamlessly and in real time.”

In working with teams, Jennifer believes one of her core competencies is to hear what isn’t being said. She realizes every team has individuals who may have competing goals and different philosophies and wants to get those issues and concerns out in the open. “I like to take on the role of arbitrator in those cases,” Jennifer says. “When you can have someone outside the emotion recalibrate the conversation and put concerns out there

in different words, you can often get past a lot of the objections.”

Jennifer never felt that being a woman in a male-dominated industry has held her back. In fact, she believes it can be an advantage. “Being the only woman in a room has given me a voice I may not have had otherwise,” Jennifer says. “Your voice carries a weight of authority that can’t be challenged since your life experiences are not known or shared by the others sitting with you.”

One such woman who has helped Jennifer develop her networking skills is Dayna Kully of 5thGenWireless. She has valued watching Dayna in meetings and how she networks with others. “I have never been particularly good or comfortable with networking,” Jennifer says. “She took me under her wing, advocated for me and introduced me to people that I needed to know.”

When she considers best practices for working in a constantly evolving field, she recommends reading from many different sources and surrounding yourself with people from whom you can learn. “Don’t be afraid to say ‘I don’t know,’” Jennifer says. “Remembering that it’s okay to admit when you can’t answer a question, leaves you open to what is really possible and to hearing other perspectives. We always need to allow ourselves to be challenged.” ✨

Dayna L. Kully

Master relationship builder bridges the gap between hoteliers and nextgen technologies

Co-founder • 5thGenWireless
Paradise Valley, Arizona USA



Dayna Kully, co-founder of 5thGenWireless LLC, became passionate about the hospitality industry fresh out of college when she began calling on Fairmont Hotels in San Francisco. Thirty-eight years later, she appreciates the invaluable and rewarding relationships she has developed, “it’s like having a large, extended family.”

She started her career as an account executive with PacBell in San Francisco selling network circuits and services like HoBIS. She soon moved into the hospitality industry sector and never left. Dayna recalls that technology was more simple and straightforward then. “The biggest challenge was trying to figure out where hospitality technology was headed because innovation occurred so painfully slow,” Dayna says.

Now the rapid pace of technology innovation has become a new challenge. Dayna spends much of her time keeping up with the constantly changing standards in all aspects of wireless — Wi-Fi, cellular, etc.

“Because we are a future-looking consultancy, we must keep up with these standards and try to predict the impact, value and risk for hoteliers three to five years down the road,” Dayna says.

When it comes to emerging technologies, Dayna sees HotSpot2.0, CBRS, 5G and Edge computing as having the biggest impact. “They are going to revolutionize how hotel brands and their properties engage with guests, staff and visitors, and how they personalize and differentiate the guest experience and improve operations,” Dayna says.

“It is so important to have a mentor, particularly someone you do not report to, so you can get a fresh perspective and be honest about your feelings.”

Dayna recalls one of the most challenging experiences in her career was when she was a new global account manager leading a team to support Hilton Hotels Corporation’s telecom needs. She had moved from the Bay Area to Los Angeles for the position to find her only customer would never do business with the company again. He gave her a list of 13 critical issues, one being The Waldorf Astoria in New York, which had several challenges with the PBX her company had installed, another was

the hold music was connected to the audio of an adult channel. Dayna promised the customer she wouldn’t return until she resolved all 13 issues.

“It took three months and every team member to resolve these issues. I kept my promise — we shipped a new refrigerator-sized cabinet (at no charge) and fixed the audio connection (resolved this first),” Dayna says. “We earned 100 percent of their business over the next year and retained it for years.”

While being a female in a predominantly male industry can have its challenges, Dayna feels she’s been treated with respect by her customers, associates and the industry at large. She feels strongly about mentoring women inside and outside the industry. “It’s so important to have a mentor, particularly someone you don’t report to, so you can get a fresh perspective and be honest about your feelings,” Dayna says.

In her “spare” time, Dayna rescues pugs, enjoys exercising (so she can eat great food) and travels the world scuba diving and getting exposure to other cultures. “I’m also passionate about coaching young people, helping them find their short- and long-term paths in life.” ✨



Kelly MacPherson

Leader that supports teams to drive value creation through technology

CIO • Restaurant Brands International
Toronto, Ontario Canada



Kelly MacPherson grew up in the hospitality industry. She worked in her parent’s restaurant and bar in a small Minnesota town and fell in love with the industry’s dynamism and its ability to positively impact a guest’s day “whether with a smile, a welcoming experience or driving sales through marketing various initiatives (of course it was low tech at that time including flyers and punch cards),” MacPherson says.

Now leading tech initiatives at Restaurant Brands International, MacPherson started her technology journey right after college by working as an operations manager at Planet Hollywood. One of her first tasks was to work with the point of sale (POS) team and since she loved data and numbers, she found she had a knack for system installations. Through her work, she realized technology needed to be more relatable and less intimidating — and to drive real change, the industry had to bridge the gap and translate more effectively between technology and operations.

“Acting as part translator and part installer, I built trust-based relationships with all of my colleagues because I offered solutions and had a maniacal, unrelenting passion for delivering excellence and doing whatever it took to get the job done,” MacPherson says.

Early in her career, she was tasked with opening a restaurant in Maui and installing the POS system. She had little training and no real IT experience at the time, so she read every manual and performed a practice run in her hotel room. The system began to fail soon after the restaurant’s opening and

“Acting as part translator and part installer, I built trust-based relationships with all of my colleagues because I offered solutions and had a maniacal, unrelenting passion for delivering excellence and doing whatever it took to get the job done.”

she spent days working with her vendor to fix the problem. “I learned then the importance of grit and determination, and it is with that same dedication that I have approached each challenge throughout my career.”

She sees the importance of learning new technologies that will focus on guest behaviors and deliver a customized experience. She works to upgrade her company’s legacy technology to meet the needs of their

guests, breaking down the barriers and traditional ways of problem solving to deliver what guests are demanding. “Our industry is fully driven by data, and that means we need to excel at one-to-one marketing, CRM and machine learning, all with the goal of delivering a distinctive guest experience,” MacPherson says.

Sometimes the only woman in a meeting room, MacPherson has found it difficult to break in. She feels there is a misperception that women in technology roles are too opinionated or can come off too strong. “But the environment is improving,” MacPherson says. “So many opportunities have opened up for women in the field, and more are considering technology than ever before.”

MacPherson credits her success to her team — a diverse set of individuals from all over the world. She invests in talent and makes sure they are constantly learning. She is intent on keeping the work interesting and engaging, including using AI to allow the team to focus on strategic change. “I am also a firm believer that our vendors are part of the extended team, and that we need to work together to deliver exceptional results for our business partners and our guests.” ✨

Shannon McCallum

Hotel operator with a focus on service delivery and innovation

Vice President, Hotel Operations
ARIA Resort & Casino and Vdara Hotel & Spa
Las Vegas, Nevada USA



Shannon McCallum started working in hotels during her summer breaks from high school. She remembers at age 16 working a dinner with dignitaries as her first thrilling experience in the field. Thirty years later, she still loves what she does. “I know how rare it is to find a dynamic career that doesn’t feel like work,” McCallum says.

Shannon entered the technology field in 2010 when she joined MGM Resorts at ARIA Resort & Casino. The largest green hotel at the time, the property featured 4,004 guest rooms, over 18 million square feet of function space and was chock-full of brand-new technology. She spent a great deal of time researching technology that would provide the best guest experience.

Her focus is the guest arrival experience, since “guests do not like to wait in line — ever!” Regardless of a property’s size, ensuring a seamless arrival can be a challenge, and for many years technology had not addressed this hot button. Shannon is happy to see new solutions allowing guests to select their preferred method of arrival, whether it is through a pre-arrival invitation to do online check-in, use a mobile application or in-person. “As a company, we have spent much effort to integrate technology into our guest arrival experience to provide options for our guests,” Shannon says. “Our digital key, one of the features available on our MGM Resorts app, is a great example of that.”

Shannon believes that it is critical for hotels to build close partnerships with internal IT partners and outside vendors who support the hardware

“Over the years, I have learned that it is important to ask questions and educate myself as much as possible on whatever the subject matter is, so I can have a voice at the table and feel comfortable contributing.”

and software in use. Equally important is having an understanding of the end of life of current technology and creating a plan of transition for future upgrades and replacement of equipment.

“Over the years, I have learned that it is important to ask questions and educate myself as much as possible on whatever the subject matter is, so I can have a voice at the table and feel comfortable contributing,” Shannon says. “I have built strong relationships with technology partners to continue my growth as this realm is ever-changing.”

Shannon stresses the importance of teamwork to achieve success on a project. Developing a path towards mobile check-in was a goal for her company. To be able to develop, pilot and roll out this initiative across multiple properties was an enormous task. “The key to success was working closely with company IT professionals, the vendor partners and the hotel operators prior to, during and after the installation to ensure all items were addressed,” she says.

Shannon appreciates the ever-evolving education technology brings even after it’s installed. The remote controls in her guest rooms went through a few updates before they found a process that allowed for optimum battery life and was more convenient for their guests. “Technology as a whole is not perfect and it can take a few trial runs before it is a success,” Shannon says.

She points to her mentor, Paul Berry, as a contributor to her own success. “He stressed that the sharing of our opinions is critical to the success of our business,” Shannon says. “Each person has a unique voice and perspective to share and we cannot be successful unless we understand all potential sides or outcomes to a situation.” ✨



Keryn McNamara

Technology leader driving strategic innovations with a passion for executing projects flawlessly

Vice President, Hotel Technology • Omni Hotels & Resorts
Dallas, Texas USA



From her earliest days in hospitality, Keryn McNamara knew that the customer experience was always the top priority. Now at Omni Hotels & Resorts, Keryn leads the hotel technology team for the North American luxury brand, and does so always with the guest in mind. “My favorite part of what we do is the 'surprise and delight' element. Having that service-industry background at a young age ignited the passion I have for providing outstanding service to our guests and associates.”

Keryn’s long career at Omni Hotels & Resorts started on the operations side. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in hospitality administration/management from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, she rose through the ranks. Demonstrating her value as director of revenue management in the Pittsburgh area, she was promoted to manager of corporate operations and moved to Omni’s corporate office in Dallas, where she eventually became the senior manager of corporate operations. A turning point of her career came in January 2012 when she moved from operations to IT, taking the role of senior manager of hotel technology. “An opportunity presented itself for me to be on the 'people-side' of technology after a mentor of mine recognized my ability to speak both languages, and we were able to bridge that gap between service and technology.”

“What I learn from other departments and associates when implementing any new system or technology, I bring back to our team to help them better understand how the back-end relates to the user experience. This helps bring it back to the service side of technology.”

While it was a welcome change, the transition did not come without its challenges. “I don’t come from a technology background, so my early challenge when I first entered the field was catching up. I had to truly immerse myself in this industry and language to get up to speed.”

Keryn’s expertise and leadership were put to the test in 2013 when Omni Hotels & Resorts acquired a number of resorts at once and needed to

integrate and convert their technology over to Omni’s. “Through this process, we learned about our systems and procedure efficiencies, but it also opened our thinking about adopting and implementing technology that these resorts were already using. I’m most proud of the fact that our small team worked hand-in-hand to accomplish this transition in such a short amount of time while still providing excellent support to the 30+ properties we had at the time.” Keryn turned this challenge into a major accomplishment, and this achievement, along with several other successful projects, led to promotions to director, and finally vice president of hotel technology.

“As a leader and enterprise-wide collaborator, it’s important to look at issues as opportunities and that’s what’s so exciting about hospitality technology today. I have the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with my general managers every day to move technology forward and enhance the overall guest experience.”

Ever-evolving hospitality technology is essential to operations. With a thoughtful strategy dedicated to the guest experience, Keryn continues to lead her team, and the Omni brand, in the push for the innovations of tomorrow. ✨

Tammy Peter

Seasoned hospitality executive focused on revenue optimization and distribution excellence

EVP Global Distribution and Revenue Management
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts, Inc.
Parsippany, New Jersey USA



Alignment is critical. For Tammy Peter the most important principle, the essential guiding inspiration is knowing that when the whole system is hung just right, it is a beautiful thing. “It is critical to work closely with a business to understand the strategies of the organization and how we can enable them through technology. Technology isn’t the driver, it is what enables the business to achieve its goals — so alignment is critical.” And Tammy has the career-proven wisdom to know what works.

After the University of Michigan, a one-time summer job got the ball rolling, “I fell into the industry by accident when I took a job as a reservation agent for Embassy Suites. It was supposed to be an interim position I took on while I figured out what I wanted to do long-term. But, I ended up loving the industry and never leaving.” With her nascent career passion as a guide, Tammy’s experience deepened, “but regardless of job title, I truly love the feeling of providing true hospitality. At the end of the day, we are all striving to provide an excellent experience for our bookers, customers and guests.”

“I started in the hospitality industry at a time when computerized bookings were new and central reservation systems were evolving.” Tammy’s broad expertise has been building in tandem with an industry transformed by the shockwaves of technology and the integration of the internet into our daily lives. “It challenged the way we priced our ho-tels. And of course, images and descriptive content became much more important than when it was just shared over the phone or in print — now

“It is critical to work closely with a business to understand the strategies of the organization and how we can enable them through technology. Technology isn’t the driver, it is what enables the business to achieve its goals — so alignment is critical.”

consumers could see first-hand what to expect. Changing expectations meant we had to change the way we did business. We needed to be aware, learn as much as we could and understand the business impacts to make the best decisions about how to use these new technologies.”

In the mix of this industry-wide transformation, Tammy found support in the professionals around her. “I have been lucky to have some strong mentors throughout my career, both men and women. I would encourage everyone to ask for advice, listen and bring value where they can.” Tammy hopes that her place as a success in the male-saturated world of technology will inspire

up-and-comers just starting their careers. “It’s amazing how important being useful can be. I have also profited from some excellent women’s leadership programs where I became more conscious of using assertive language, being confident in a male-dominated environment and speaking up because each person’s unique insights are important to create the best solution.”

In her drive to create solutions and optimize every opportunity with the perfect array of technology, Tammy knows first-hand that it is all about effective teamwork. “I think leadership and teamwork go hand-in-hand... you can’t have one without the other. For example, if there is a bad system migration, I bring a team together to examine every nuance, every detail. While remapping and rebuilding an entire system would be a personal challenge I would rise up to, a solution is only possible with the help of key leaders coming together to make some tough decisions as a unified team.”

Looking forward Tammy sees exciting things in the shifting landscape. “There is a great opportunity with voice commands, which could be a great way to book somewhere a consumer has already shopped. When everything is considered aligned just right, what a great way to share the beauty of a hotel!” ✨



Geneva Rinehart

A writer/editor who brings hospitality industry innovations to readers around the world

SVP | Managing Editor • *Hospitality Upgrade Magazine*
Roswell, Georgia USA



In the hospitality industry, there are those who make it run and those who report the race. For just shy of a quarter century now, Geneva Rinehart at *Hospitality Upgrade* magazine has made it her business to track the trends, speak to the influencers and produce content related to the always changing world of hotel technology.

Hospitality Upgrade's roots stretch back to 1992. Then, founder and publisher Rich Siegel launched *Hospitality & Automation*, a small newsletter following the hotel technology space. An iteration thereafter led to the official launch of *Hospitality Upgrade* in 2000 — one of the only publications to exclusively cover hotel technology.

In the mid-'90s, technology was still an inchoate segment of the hotel industry. While you could access a guest room with an electronic key card, it wasn't until around 1995 that you could book a room online. Things were not where they are today. Still, Siegel saw a business opportunity, and Rinehart became his first hire.

She was the ideal fit for the job. She not only grasped technology, but also knew how to write about it in a way that was understandable and even enjoyable to read. She credits a counselor at Penn State for helping her hone that particular skill. After her freshman year, he recommended that in addition to taking more science and math classes, she mix in some writing and communications courses. As he saw it, the publishing world needed people who could smoothly convey abstruse subject matter.

"I love our industry use of 'jargon' and the fact that there's always some 'buzz' about something. The industry is never boring and it's constantly evolving."

Rinehart has done it with aplomb in a space — publishing — that is high on stress and low on patience. Media runs on deadlines and coffee, it's part of the everyday experience. One rather fraught anecdote illustrates this, as Rinehart retells. One Friday, she and her team were working into the evening and just about to lay an issue to bed. They decided to go out for a late dinner, then come back to the office Saturday morning to put on the last touches. The next morning, they arrived to flashing lights and a mass of police: about 30 minutes earlier, someone had broken into their office and absconded with their computers — along with the entire issue.

Proving that nothing, not even theft, would thwart a deadline, a marathon session began of piecing the issue back together from a trail of paper printouts. Friends and family brought in their personal computers so they could key in every word. They met their deadline.

Rinehart learned three things that day: hard work prevails, surround yourself with great people and, always backup your work!

When she first started in publishing, it was it was at a major turning point. The rise of the internet allowed *Hospitality Upgrade* to be one of the first industry publications with a website covering hotel technology. Publishing continues to evolve, and the need for more content, faster content and personalized content keeps her and the *Upgrade* team busy.

The technology they report on has also come far since her first days at the magazine. Today, she is most fascinated with aspects such as mobile technology and AI, and the fact that she can literally conduct about 90 percent of her job from a smartphone.

But if she had to pick just one favorite technology, it would be robotics. And not for the reason you might think, like to clean a room or check in a guest. No, to stand in and do all her public speaking gigs, she admits. ✨

Iris Steinmetz

Product and integrations specialist
with a keen eye for big data

VP, Product and Partnerships • SnapShot
Berlin, Germany



Big data is one of those cryptic terms, often bandied about from one hospitality conference to the next, and no more discernible at the end. Maybe that's why they call it *big*.

But one woman is working to clear up the confusion as an executive at SnapShot, a data processing platform that helps the hospitality industry "collect, harmonize and analyze data." In other words, get its arms around big data to the point where it can be used to bring value to the business and to the customer.

Steinmetz has been working in the hospitality industry going on 20 years now, and has done so both working in a hotel and providing technology solutions to them. Having two perspectives, she says, is what helps her succeed.

It's also what helped her career evolve. For example, while general manager at a hotel in the United Kingdom, she led the switch out of the property management system. This led to a technical product manager position with Micros-Fidelio, one of the first companies to offer two-way PMS interfaces, as well as connectivity to the GDS and web-booking engines.

It was at that hotel, The Revere in the Channel Islands, that she encountered one of her first role models and mentors, who had a big impact on Steinmetz's career. Paul Doran, the hotel's owner, was a real visionary in many areas technology related. At the time (late-'90s), smartphones did not exist and bar code readers were only used in shops. Doran devised a tool to scan bar codes assigned to the different types of wine in the

"Don't take no for an answer! Dare to take on a challenge, which might seem too large at the time, but you will grow with the demands on you."

cellar, and once the bar code reader was linked up to a cradle to match the required numbers, the order would be automatically sent by fax each Sunday evening to the wine dealer. Talk about connectivity!

That term connectivity, and integration, have a heavy hold on Steinmetz: she embraces them because they are her biggest challenges. When Steinmetz started in the hotel business, there was close to no integration. Larger hotel chains were beginning to connect their proprietary CRS to their PMS, but the majority of systems were not connected. It's amazing

what can happen in two decades, however. Today, even smaller, independent hotels are fully integrated, yet the playing field is still stacked in favor of those with scale.

Like other data wonks, Steinmetz is excited over the applications of AI and machine learning, particularly with regard to how data is processed today — which is to say there is so much data that much of it is lost or perishable.

"We are seeing more and more systems using some form of machine learning, being it chat bots, revenue management systems, etc. ... many vendors and even hotel chains have interesting projects planned, so I am looking forward to the benefit it can bring to our industry."

As a woman, Steinmetz's career path has not been too cluttered by gender politics. For example, she notes that in the early days of the Micros-Fidelio EAME region, 90 percent of the product managers were female, which showed hiring based on qualification. Still, she says there is room for improvement. At one industry conference, she was the only female among 21 speakers.

Beyond work, Steinmetz is quite the pioneer. With friends' help, she built her own house. Her tool shed, she says, would make some men cry with envy. ✨



Suzy Treece

Global hospitality digital transformation and practice leader

Head of Global Hospitality • Aruba
Gainesville, Georgia USA



Suzy Treece began her professional technology career, while living in Silicon Valley. Early in her career, she joined a computer time-share company working closely with government agencies and the space program. Moving from computer operations to systems programming, she honed her technical skills before moving into consultative selling. She began calling on hotels as a telecom consultant and realized this was the industry for her. “It is a passionate, fun loving and service-oriented industry,” Suzy says. “I enjoy the people, the diversity of brands and level of service.”

When she started in computer operations and systems programming, the field was dominated by men. She worked twice as hard to prove herself. “In hindsight, it built great perseverance and character and made me who I am today,” Suzy says.

Now she feels the culture has changed and women are being embraced for technology roles. Sometimes women have a unique perspective that is increasingly being valued, particularly in the hospitality space.

Her move to hospitality technology has been a 25-year career journey touching down in multiple sectors along the way. Before joining Aruba, she led the global hospitality practice and solution portfolio at SAP, including hotels, cruises, entertainment, travel and restaurants. Previously, she led the hospitality practice at Cisco. Suzy also spent 11 combined years at IHG in multiple roles, including senior vice president of global technology operations and later as a senior consultant with a focus on the next generation reservation system. In addition, Suzy has also consulted with Mandarin Oriental and has worked in leadership roles for two major application companies.

“Collaboration and team work are key. Maintain integrity and always treat others with respect.”

Suzy places strong emphasis on collaboration and teamwork. She recalls a time in her career when she was promoted to turn around data center operations when employee morale was very low. To turn things around, Suzy focused on listening to employees, emphasized personal and professional development, and welcomed open communication. “We held people accountable and tightened the belt on wasteful spending,” she says. “With this, we were able to improve employee satisfaction by six

percent, taking the team scores to the highest in IT. We also reduced turnover and improved the bottom line and worker efficiency.” Suzy also instituted a diversity program to create more awareness and a fair work culture.

Suzy also puts great value on mentorship and attributes success during a challenging time to her own mentor. An entire division of her company’s data was corrupted, and the only backup was seven days old. She was able to solve the issue using her mentor’s coaching on the disciplines and process of problem resolution. “He always said, ‘Write down every step you take, whether it fails or succeeds, and once you have a resolution, follow the exact same process in the production system,’” Suzy says. “I was able to do that day what a dozen senior programmers could not.”

She feels integrity and treating others with respect are key attributes to running an IT department. With a fondness for transparency, she encourages others to be direct. “Don’t be afraid to ask questions,” Suzy says.

Suzy’s early education included nursing and emergency medicine, later developing a passion for holistic medicine. Suzy enjoys gardening in her spare time, and lives in the foothills of Georgia, with her husband and three sons. ✨

Heide Werthamer

Technology provider for the hotel industry –
from hotel openings to ongoing support

Chief Operations Officer • Edge Communications
Plano, Texas USA



When it comes to the hospitality technology industry, Heide Werthamer understands that without hospitality, it is just tech. “If the customer experience is the number one priority, everything else falls into place eventually.”

Heide is a founding member of Edge Communications, a telecommunications and network solutions provider for hospitality clients, and the key to providing the best technology to Heide’s clients comes from her experience as a hospitality professional herself. That experience starts with a New York legend. “In my 20s, I took a job in New York with Ian Schrager with no experience in hospitality. It did not take long to realize that hospitality was in my blood.” As the assistant to the development group for Morgans Hotel Group (Ian Schrager Hotels), Heide oversaw the day-to-day operations of all development activities for a company that was redefining the guest experience in hospitality. “Working with Ian Schrager and Michael Overington at Morgans Hotel Group taught me that anything is possible, if you have the drive to get it done. ‘No’ was not an option at MHG... instead it was, ‘how can we, together, get the seemingly impossible accomplished?’”

That “must-do” mentality served Heide well when she blazed a new trail into tech as the vice president of operations for Visual Radio, LLC, an Internet incubator company in the nascent days of the world wide web. Managing a staff of 60, as well as overseeing production and implementation of all online business systems required a confident hand at the helm,

“In an ever-changing environment, you need to expect the unexpected and be able to adjust quickly. Having a passion for solving problems is a must. If the customer experience is the number one priority, everything else falls into place eventually.”

especially in a brand new, male-dominant field. “Very early on, I realized that being a female leader has its advantages. Women communicate differently; we negotiate softly but effectively and we are able to get the job done. We must not think of how to emulate a male leader; we need to know how to be an innovative female leader.”

Her experience with MHG, working to develop the ultimate guest experience led her in 2002 to purchase and operate the boutique hotel Casa Morada with two Schrager alumni and becoming general manager of the property. Both her hospitality and tech background were crucial to making Casa Morada the Trip Advisor number one place to stay for Islamorada, Florida and gaining notice with features in many of the world’s top travel publications. Heide recalls, “For 13 years, my favorite part of the day was exceeding guest expectations.”

Exceeding expectations is still what Heide aims to achieve at Edge Communications, where she is helping hotels discover and implement technology in order to provide that “better than home” experience for their guests and staff. “Right now I am looking carefully at voice activation in rooms, because I think it is here to stay and we need to further investigate how it enhances the guest experience.”

Ironically, the hard work she and her clients put in to achieve a connected guest experience would be for naught when Heide is the guest. An avid traveler herself, when she is on personal time, she seeks destinations with limited or no Wi-Fi so that she can truly disconnect. ✨