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10 NEWS

International

Thought leadership event marks Les Roches 60th anniversary

On November 20, Les Roches International School of Hotel Management celebrated its 60th anniversary by hosting "Breaking Boundaries in Education," a conference that brought together global leaders in the hospitality industry.

The one-day event, held at the "Fondation Pierre Arnaud," close to Les Roches campus in Bluche, Switzerland and the Alpine resort of Crans-Montana, included keynote speakers and panel sessions on innovation, entrepreneurship and employability, as well as the latest trends in hospitality and the role education plays in shaping the industry's future. The event began with keynote speaker Suzan LeVine, U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland, who discussed the major global economic and social challenges plus the importance of professional education. Panelists included Omer Kaddouri, CEO of Rotana Hotel Management Corporation



PJSC with Michel Gehrig, vice president of talent development at Kempinski and Rafael Micha, chief marketing officer, GRUPO Habita, which is internationally recognized for their proactive architecture and interior design art. Joining them were pioneers such as Zhang Mei, the founder of Wild China and Susan Harmsworth, CEO of ESPA, who have both capitalized on trends in sustainable ecotourism and the burgeoning spa sector. "It has been a remarkable journey for our school and one that has brought [us] so many reasons to be proud," said Sonia Tatar, CEO

of Les Roches Worldwide. "In many corners of the world, our alumni and students are making unique contributions to the industry by leading, transforming and enriching it with their innovative and entrepreneurial approaches." Les Roches is recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which allows UAE nationals to apply for full scholarships if they are accepted into Les Roches for undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Lesroches.edu

Hoteliers: are you listening to what travelers are telling you?

Brian Payea, head of industry relations, TripAdvisor, speaks to Hospitality News at Les Roche Global Summit about strengthening the ties between TripAdvisor and the hospitality community

Should hoteliers fear TripAdvisor?

I don't know why they should. There is always a reaction to anything that is new but we have been around for 14 years. Hotels can benefit [from TripAdvisor] since there are some fascinating case studies for properties that look into the emergence of reviews and the importance of their power. What the case studies have said is that when you really want to grab benefit from reviews that is the time when you start to look closely at what the travelers are telling you and using that information to improve what you are offering to your travelers.

Tell us about the 'management setup' and associated resources

Every single property on TripAdvisor has its own management setup with resources that are only available to that property, which afterwards becomes part of the community that is registered and is verified as being a representative of that particular property. It is then that they gain access to management tool resources that are custom-created just for that property; based on the reviews they have, the interaction with the travelers themselves and whether or not the property is submitting responses.

What are the benefits?

The beneficial part is that they [hoteliers/restaurants] are connected with their travelers; with more travelers on TripAdvisor than anywhere else on earth. There is the opportunity to hear from travelers about what is important and the management center helps you to put this into perspective, not only to see what they say about you but to see how you stack up against the competition.



There is bound to be something that travelers are going to say to the competition, which can help you to identify areas that could help you to bring more to your own offering. tripadvisor.com

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Hotels

Breaking boundaries, building new solutions

Omer Kaddouri, president and CEO Rotana, speaks about innovation and Rotana's forage into the untapped markets of Iran and Afghanistan

What does innovation look and feel like to Rotana?

Innovation isn't only about developing new systems and new machines. It is also about developing and enhancing existing ideas that are already in place. There is a need to go back to basics because we are in the hospitality industry and sometimes we may forget why we are in the business; which is to serve customers to make sure that we do everything for them before they ask. Financially, it doesn't cost a lot of money to enhance what you have already. However, I believe that it's a balance. You have to work with what is also happening today, such as in the digital world and on digital platforms; you have to "keep up with the Jones", whilst making sure that the core reason why we are in business is taken care of. For me innovation is creativity and change, all in one basket.

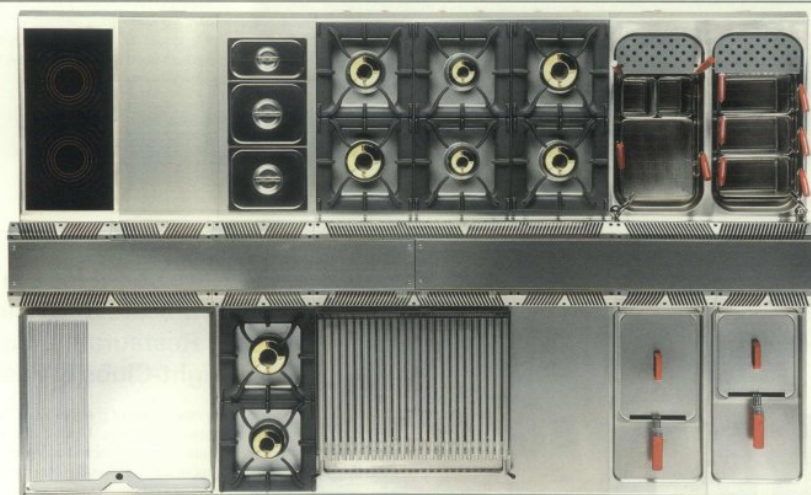
What are the "basics"?

Making sure that everything in guests' rooms is working, and that guests have what they need, including cleanliness of rooms. Hoteliers are not putting importance on such elements, nor are they looking for ways to enhance

these basics services. You [hoteliers] can do things in a different way. You can put new innovative amenities in a room when guests arrive, check people in online, via tablet, as they arrive via limousine from airport to hotel. All these services are advancements of basic services.

Tell us about Rotana's recent expansion to the east.

We already have hotel projects in Iran, which are expected to be complete in 2015 onwards, with two in Tehran and two in Mashhad. Iran is an underserved market for mid to upper scale luxury hotels, which don't exist there, although there are many hotels running at a local level. We were approached, negotiated, and we got the deals. There are a further two hotels also planned for Afghanistan, which will be the first multinational brand hotel in Afghan. For the first few months we will probably have to develop the [Afghan] workforce for it to be ready to embrace the hospitality industry at the levels that we need them to. We are going to have to develop training schools first; training for English basic skills, role playing, and even get them to understand how to wear a uniform and to understand hygiene in all areas. This is our biggest challenge. This should have happened already but, due to the elections there, it has been delayed. However, we are hoping to go ahead by the end of this year, or early next year. rotana.com



hospitality starts here.

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