



Taking part were (l-r) Nizam Omar, Christoph Franzen, and Sven Hoffmeyer.

DIRECTOR OF ROOMS

Following stints with Hyatt in Moscow and Muscat, Christoph Franzen joined Grand Hyatt Dubai two years ago.

"When I got offered a job here, at what is considered our flagship property, I was naturally happy to accept. Dubai is such a fantastic place," Franzen said.

It is no mean feat handling the laundry, spa, housekeeping, front desk and guest service operations departments as well as 674 rooms and more than 300 staff — although the latter varies. "We have an outsourced work-force for some areas, especially for housekeeping, so we can adjust to requirements in high-season and low-season," explained Franzen, adding that recruitment was a problem.

"Finding and retaining the right staff is definitely our number one challenge. I think the way the industry is growing, with all these new properties growing, it's a huge issue."

But the Grand Hyatt has numerous measures aimed at ensuring job satisfaction and promoting staff loyalty.

"From what I have seen, we have the best staff accommodation in Dubai. We offer a host of leisure facilities; we offer packages in line with the competition; we promote from within whenever possible; and we're very lucky because we have three properties in Dubai, so obviously there's the opportunity to transfer between them. Of course, the brand name Hyatt is quite an attraction for a lot of staff."

Franzen has kept busy during his time here, ensuring the property maintains the highest standards.

"What we implemented here that I haven't seen anywhere else is a VIP

The Grand scheme of things

From solar panels to VIP services, director of rooms **Christoph Franzen**, assistant director of food and beverage **Nizam Omar** and director of marketing **Sven Hoffmeyer** have plenty on their plate in their roles at Grand Hyatt Dubai, as they tell *Hotelier Middle East*

Team," he explained. "This team takes care of a guest from the moment they arrive at the airport. We have someone with them all the way until they're checked in, and they also have a special extension they can call to get assistance with anything from restaurant bookings to flight reservations.

"We have also come on leaps and bounds in our green initiatives; our engineering department just introduced solar panels on top of the neighbouring Grand Cinema complex, so we now use solar energy. If you go to our guest rooms you'll find no plastic; everything that was wrapped in plastic is now in cellulose. And all our cleaning chemicals are biodegradable. We as a company have put environment at the top of our agenda."

For 2008 Franzen's aim is to repeat the success of 2007, although he admitted this would get harder with the increased competition.

To ensure the whole Hyatt machine runs as smoothly as possible, he meets his fellow directors on a daily basis.

"As director of rooms I work especially closely with F&B, which is also considered an operational department," Franzen said.

"We have a strong relationship with sales and marketing as well, but that's more a strategic partnership in the sense of selling the rooms at the right time and the right price."

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF F&B

Nizam Omar is a Hyatt veteran, having been with the group for nearly 15 years.

"I've worked at the Grand Hyatt Dubai for five years, since opening," Omar said. "I started as the manager of the Pepper Crab outlet then moved up to assistant director. That's thing I like about Hyatt — there is opportunity, there is growth potential."

"FINDING AND RETAINING THE RIGHT STAFF IS DEFINITELY OUR NUMBER ONE CHALLENGE"

Omar is responsible for banqueting, which comprises 72 regular staff with occasional staff joining for larger functions.

Omar believes the staff should be a property's focus.

"I believe strongly in respecting your staff. I believe, based on my own experience, that it's all about people skills. You as manager should make sure that the staff enjoy coming to work and don't just come because they need to. It's important to make sure your staff are happy."

Omar is a great believer in communication. "I hope I've improved my staff's people skills and communication in general. That's how things run smoothly," he said.

"Banqueting overlaps with a lot of departments, so it's all about communicating with the other departments regularly, keeping everyone up-to-date.

"Of course for a big event like a wedding I'll have a lot of the people attending staying in the hotel, so Christoph Franzen and I will need to share all comments regarding these guests. Then, of course, it's important to speak to marketing regarding promotions and seasonal marketing initiatives and so on."

This year's plans for F&B have kept all the directors busy, Franzen revealed.

"In the Manhattan Grill, iZ and Andiamo we have big Valentine's events. Then of course we have ongoing promotion for Dine In by Hyatt, our diners' loyalty programme, throughout the year."

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

Sven Hoffmeyer has been at the property a little over three years.

"The draw was primarily down to the scope of work within such a hotel, due to its sheer size, and obviously Dubai is a fascinating place to be," he said.

Hoffmeyer's day kicks off by meeting his 25-strong sales and marketing team.

"Later in the day the executive team will get together in order to review the previous day's results and obviously the forecast for the coming day," he added.

Surprisingly, Hoffmeyer revealed that he had not found recruitment to be a particular problem in the area. "It's always been a challenge to find good staff and I don't think it's a particularly Dubai-based problem," he said. "I find it rather easier to recruit for Dubai, because Dubai as a destination is interesting. It's easier to attract someone to come to Dubai than trying to do the same thing somewhere else in the world."



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He added that retaining staff is down to what the company in question has to offer.

"If you provide what an employee's looking for, whether it's housing, food, uniforms, training, growth options within the company, I find retention fairly easy. If you don't provide that then the market can become very difficult," he explained.

"If [these components] are laid out correctly, as I believe they are at Hyatt, you end up with people staying."

Hoffmeyer said his biggest challenge at the Grand Hyatt Dubai has been the implementation and re-launch of Dine In by Hyatt, the diners' loyalty programme launched in 2005. The scheme currently has almost 13,000 members.

The hotel's development and growth in the leisure market has also been a top priority since his arrival.

"This hotel has positioned itself as a city conference resort. The resort component was at that stage far weaker than it is today, so the growth we've seen in leisure over the past five years is quite substantial and we're very proud of that," Hoffmeyer said.

The coming year will be a busy one for the property, with several promotions already in the pipeline.

"We're working with a three to six-month outlook; that's when sales can effectively influence something," Hoffmeyer explained.

"The Easter period is a time when we attract the European or the CIS market with special packages. We're also already looking at the summer, which will be a bit different this year as Ramadan directly connects to the summer season, so we'll literally have 120 days of summer period — that's in-built with packages and promotions we're offering in different markets."

Naturally all marketing initiatives must be tailored to the region. "We do receive standards from corporate office, which are to be implemented without question, whether they make sense or not," Hoffmeyer said.

"On the other hand we do adapt to the local market and the needs within the Middle East, with an Arab website and so on."

Again, a big part of Hoffmeyer's busy schedule is liaising with the rest of the executive board.

"Whenever the sales team sells something, be it to do with rooms or F&B, there is interaction and communication. A lot of this is regarding planning, a lot is on pricing, a lot is on detailed information — arrival times, departure times, baggage transfers, deposits, lost luggage, basically everything. That way everybody is in the loop. It's a constant exchange of information," he concluded. **BOB**