

# HOTELIER

## PEOPLE

# Why Chris Franzen focuses on young talent at Waldorf Astoria Lusail

General manager Chris Franzen is nurturing the next generation of hoteliers to maintain the Waldorf Astoria legacy

by Josh Corder   April 21, 2023

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Waldorf Astoria Lusail general manager **[Chris Franzen](#)** has been in the industry for three decades. However, he continues to innovate, as well as nurture the next generation of hoteliers.

The Swiss hotelier is back in an operational position after two years back in his home country working in advisory roles.

“Joining the Waldorf Astoria Lusail, Doha property means a great deal to me on both a professional and personal level,” he told *Hotelier Middle East*. “After spending 30 years exploring the world and gaining invaluable experience in the hospitality industry, I’m thrilled to return to Doha, a city that holds a special place in my heart.”

Franzen has spent more than half of his career in the GCC, holding top roles across the UAE, Oman and Qatar. His last general manager role in the region was at the Grand Hyatt Doha, which he left in 2019, having turned it into one of the city’s most profitable hotels.

Working across brands and borders, he said his management style remains the same.

“It is a blend of autonomy, collaboration and innovation,” he explained. “In terms of innovation, I’m always looking for new ideas and techniques that can help us improve our hotel operations and enhance the guest experience. This means being open to exploring new approaches, even if they may not necessarily work out.”



## Trust in the next generation

The Waldorf Astoria Lusail is one of the most high-profile openings in Qatar over the past 12 months. The resort has 429 suites, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and a 200-metre private beach.

Despite running such a prestigious property, Franzen is more than happy to entrust its future to young hoteliers, and has programmes in place to build-up the next generation.

He said: “At Waldorf Astoria Lusail, and in alignment with Hilton’s overall people and culture ethos, we value our team members and believe in providing them with opportunities to grow and develop their careers. Our talent management learning path is designed to help identify and nurture superstars at every level of the organisation.

“We understand that individuals with no prior experience in hospitality may hesitate to pursue a career in the industry – that’s why it’s crucial for hotels to have strong learning and development programs in place to support these individuals. Intensive internship

programs are an excellent way to identify young people who are interested in becoming a hotelier.

“By providing hands-on experience and mentorship opportunities, we can help these individuals develop the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the industry. And the beauty of hospitality is that it offers careers across a wide range of functions – from HR, engineering and operations to F&B, front desk management and marketing, offering young professionals plenty of opportunities to pursue their passions.”



Franzen grew up in the Swiss alpine village of Zermatt at the foot of the Matterhorn. He grew up in his family's hotel, before moving abroad to complete his university education at the Australian International Hotel School, Canberra and Cornell University in the US.

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