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LIFESTYLE LUXURY TRAVEL



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CHRIS K. FRANZEN

by Jyotiee Balani | Mar 26, 2021 | Profiles | 0 comments





Chris K. Franzen is the Area Vice President for Hyatt West India and General Manager Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences. His role involves overlooking the largest portfolio of Hyatt hotels in India, including iconic properties such as the Grand Hyatt Mumbai Hotel & Residences and the luxurious Andaz Delhi Hotel. He finished his secondary schooling in Switzerland and followed this up with Chef and Sommelier culinary degrees. Chris then ventured abroad to complete his university education in Australia (Australian International Hotel School, Canberra) and the USA (Cornell University, Ithaca). He garnered experience in many countries including Switzerland, Germany, the US, Australia, Russia, the UAE, Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, and India. Before joining Hyatt, he also worked for many small luxury boutique hotel operators. His experience ranges from luxury, upscale to select service operations in urban as well as resort environments.





Chris is an avid traveler and has a great understanding of South East Asia, where he has spent many months travelling through various countries and cultures over several decades. On the finer side of things, he enjoys a good single malt and cigar whenever time permits.

What makes Hyatt stand out from other hospitality brands you've worked with?



Hyatt as a company has a very specific DNA that is centered around care and wellbeing; something that I have not seen to that extend with other hotel operators. The company has strong cultural characteristics and values that are embedded in whatever we do. Our principles determine the ways in which the organization and it's people behave, solve business problems and stand out from other hospitality brands:

Innovative – Hyatt was the first hotel chain to start the atrium lobby concept in the world. We have always found alternate and smarter solutions to issues in the hospitality industry. We take pride in the concept of being innovators of new trends in the industry.

Team Work – Hyatt encourages an environment in which employees are made to work in teams to enhance performance. This also helps in increased motivation and employee satisfaction due to constant feedback from the team. We actually have a learning module where we teach 'Hyatt Thinking'.

Care – Hyatt ensures that the employees are empathetic towards each other's needs. They portray a picture of a family when speaking with their employees to nurture a caring attitude.

Personal Growth – Hyatt has numerous programs and training modules that allow fast track growth of employees. They have recognition programs for their employees and they ensure that the performance of each employee is tracked and monitored to keep employees motivated

Multicultural – Hyatt has a presence across the globe which makes it important for the company to adapt and change according to different cultures. We wholeheartedly embrace any culture!

Customer Focused – Hyatt ensures that we are focused towards the satisfaction of their external as well as internal customers. The actions of the organization keep the employees, guests as well as owner's benefits in mind.





Building the right team is crucial for a brand's success. What are the key skills you look for when hiring new employees?

Time management

Meeting deadlines and staying efficient are imperative. Time management is a valuable skill for all today as we juggle multiple projects at the same time.

Critical thinking and problem solving

Critical thinking is a skill that allows one to objectively examine information to determine the best way to move forward, and it's a key component of problem solving. In any job and any company, employees are bound to run into unexpected challenges and setbacks. I rely on employees who take action and find creative solutions to problems the organization is facing.

Teamwork

No career path is exempt when it comes to the ability to work well on a team. Even positions with a lot of independent work will still require you to collaborate with others. Every role in a hotel is connected to other roles and teams. Employees that are able to work well with others and understand their points of view often come up with creative solutions efficiently and effectively.

Digital literacy

We live in a technology-driven age that demands digital literacy in the quest to stay ahead of the game. Being knowledgeable about the digital landscape, social media, web, trends on digital etc. is expected in the workplace today.



Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand both your own emotions and the emotions of those around you. This is a much needed skill required in the workplace where teams work together to keep functioning successfully. If teamwork is a vital component of a successful company, then emotional intelligence is the glue that makes all that collaboration possible.

The Right Attitude

This is, in my opinion, the most important point. If we hire colleagues with the right attitude, anything is possible. We can be teachers and ensure that we impart our knowledge. But associates need to have the right mindset and be open about it and understand that we are in a guest centric business.



2020 was a challenging year for the hospitality industry. In your opinion, how will travel trends change in 2021?

2020 was an extremely difficult and challenging year for our industry and for many of us. The changes throughout the year were too invasive, harsh and abrupt; affecting so many people and presenting such a massive disruption to our industry and daily lives that one would think this is a movie script and not reality. Yet here we are, in a time and place where we speak of a 'New Normal', where we faced many changes during 2020 and surely more to come in 2021.

People love to travel, dine, socialize and experience – this is where we as hosts and hoteliers come in. Welcoming our guests and colleagues back into the hotels, restaurants and resorts of the world will hopefully soon be the reality again.





Was a career in hospitality something you always dreamt of? What is your advice to aspiring hoteliers?

I grew up in the Swiss alpine village of Zermatt at the foot of mount Matterhorn. Growing up in the family hotel, I was always exposed to hospitality and travel from a very young age. I am a third-generation hotelier in my family. My advice would be to follow the unconventional and not the herd. Most of the times you will end up questioning your career choices and moves but that clarity comes out of the most indecisive decisions. Be bold and take risks.

Which Indian cities are your favourites for: 1) food 2) history 3) fashion?

- Food – Lucknow
- History – Hampi
- Fashion – Mumbai



Grand Hyatt Mumbai Lower Lobby

What are some of the new measures your team has put into place to deal with the post-COVID-19 situation?

Guided by our purpose of care and experience delivering world-class hospitality for more than 60 years, Hyatt's Global Care & Cleanliness Commitment builds on our existing rigorous safety and cleanliness protocols and includes:

- GBAC STARTM cleanliness and training accreditation process through the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) at all Hyatt hotels
- Trained Hygiene & Wellbeing Leader or team at all locations, responsible for their hotel adhering to new operational protocols and training
- Cross-functional panel of trusted medical and industry advisors—including experts to help us fine-tune safety protocols and consider various aspects of the entire hotel experience.

Hyatt's Global Care & Cleanliness Commitment is an important expression of our purpose to care for people so they can be their best—now and in the future.





At work, what is your most challenging activity and why?

People management is the most challenging part of any job where a job dedicated to someone needs to be ensured and done on time.

How has the pandemic changed the way you work?

It has helped set perspectives and priorities right.

What would you do if you weren't a hotelier?

I would be riding my motorbike around the globe and visit far flung places, cultures and people. If it would be a job you are asking, I would be a pilot.

When are you happiest?

When I am with my family and children and also when taking my bike out for a spin

Favourite or most inspirational place?

Boracay in the Philippines

What's the best piece of advice you've been given?

Never forget to stop and appreciate how far you've come and never forget that who you are is so much greater than what you do.





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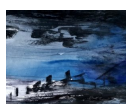
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