

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Ritz-Carlton's Caroline Gardner: Luxury Woman to Watch 2019

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Caroline Gardner

By STAFF REPORTS

Luxury Daily annually honors 25 smart women executives who show the potential to make a difference next year in the luxury business. This year's list features honorees who have set ambitious goals to achieve in a luxury market that, while growing, is also challenged by rapid changes in consumer behavior and technology.

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Here is one honoree:

Caroline Gardner, senior manager for global brand management, [The Ritz-Carlton](#), [Ritz-Carlton Reserve](#) and [Bulgari Hotels and Resorts](#), Bethesda, MD

"The challenge and the opportunity is bringing together data and human intelligence to create individualized experiences that build meaningful connections to our brand"

What do you most like about your job?

I am so lucky to have the opportunity to travel around the globe hearing stories of human kindness and thoughtfulness.

Those stories are the result of our 40,000 "ladies" and "gentlemen," each of whom comes to work each day genuinely wanting to create memorable moments for our guests. Their commitment to anticipating what might bring someone joy, or make someone's life better, is truly inspiring.

That I get to support them in creating those moments is by far the best part of my job.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

Luxury consumers are different today than they were when we were founded, and The Ritz-Carlton has to evolve along with them.

Today's guests challenge us to bring the exceptional experiences our ladies and gentlemen provide into their digital lives.

Blending the off- and online experience provides a new opportunity to exceed our guests' expectations. We just have to push the boundaries of what is possible.

What is your work priority for 2019?

Every interaction provides us with an opportunity to create a guest for life.

We were once limited to doing this only while a guest stayed with us, but the digital world has made it possible for us to bridge our interactions beyond the in-stay experience.

Imagine that a month after checking out, a guest from Hong Kong receives a digital copy of Esquire UK, with a note that says "We noticed you enjoyed catching up on trends while you were visiting, we thought you might enjoy copy of next month's issue. We hope to see you again soon."

It's those thoughtful moments when we can engage our guests long after their stay and deepen their relationship with our brand that we're looking to further in 2019.

The challenge and the opportunity is bringing together data and human intelligence to create individualized experiences that build meaningful connections to our brand.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

The Ritz-Carlton scored 902 points in the J.D. Power 2018 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index.

Not only was our score 14 points better than last year, it was the highest score ever for a hospitality brand in the history of the index.

Among the many reasons we scored so high was our continued commitment to luxury service, which we have made a point of refining and reshaping this past year.

My team has worked with our properties to define what luxury service for the 21st century looks like, and to see our brand rewarded with top honors means we're doing something right.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2019?

While global luxury consumers certainly have regional differences, I think we are seeing a few big trends that will continue to shape luxury in 2019:

Meaning: Luxury purchases are no longer solely about influencing external perceptions, they are increasingly about how a product or experience makes someone feel, physically and emotionally.

Knowledge gathering: As masters in their own craft, luxury consumers value the skill and artistry that goes into making a given product. But, we increasingly see a desire to learn from expert craftsmen about a given craft.

Social good: To earn the love of luxury consumers today, companies must demonstrate a shared commitment to making the world around us a better place.

[Please click here to see the entire Luxury Women to Watch 2019 list](#)

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