

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Michelle Woodley: Luxury Woman to Watch 2019

November 29, 2018



Michelle Woodley

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:

Michelle Woodley, president, **Preferred Hotels & Resorts**, Chicago

"The hotel industry is exciting. However, we have a challenge in attracting and retaining talent"

What do you most like about your job?

I love that I learn something new every day.

Whether a new piece of information comes from discovering an unknown talent of one of our associates, celebrating the joining of a new unique hotel in an awesome location, or hearing from one of our hoteliers about a challenge and knowing that our team at Preferred Hotels & Resorts can help, it excites me to be enriched and utilize the new-found knowledge to the benefit of our company and member hotels.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?

The hotel industry is exciting. However, we have a challenge in attracting and retaining talent.

We find that bright young adults graduating from hospitality schools around the world are lured in to other industries for high-paying jobs.

We are working with several universities to place interns at our independent hotels and many of our executives participate in mentoring programs.

By exposing the emerging workforce to the variety of roles and opportunities within the hospitality industry and by engaging them on a personal level, we hope to contribute to bringing in the talent that is passionate and appreciative

of the business.

What is your proudest achievement in luxury?

Establishing and executing on the strategy to launch the I Prefer Global Guest Benefit Program in 2006 was a major accomplishment and definitely something I am proud to have led.

At the time, we were a house of brands with more than 500 worldwide hotels. This program provided the platform to unite these independent luxury hotels across our brands with discerning like-minded travelers.

We have evolved and, today, we are a single brand, Preferred Hotels & Resorts, and our guest loyalty program, I Prefer Hotel Rewards, is now the largest points-based hotel loyalty program for independent hotels with more than 650 participating properties.

The program is a critical piece of our strategy in uniting our hotels with our guests.

How do you see luxury evolving in 2019?

Luxury will continue to be defined by each individual. There is no standard formula.

We see that many of today's travelers define luxury as an authentic and genuine experience that teaches them something beyond what they had previously heard from others or experienced virtually via social media.

This evolution will continue and authenticity and personalization will be key.

What is your work priority for 2019?

Alongside our ownership and leadership group headed by CEO Lindsey Ueberroth, our goals are to grow our brand through the addition of new hotels to the portfolio, expand our consumer reach through guest-facing programs such as our I Prefer Hotel Rewards program, meet evolving consumer needs through new areas such as Preferred Residences, and ensure our associates across the globe understand our values and mission and the important role they play in helping us achieve these goals.

As part of this, we remain focused on making our pineapple logo a globally recognized symbol of our brand promise to deliver unparalleled levels of hospitality and service to independent-minded travelers.

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

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