




Hospitality Daily Podcast

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Mastering Hotel Onboarding: Olympia's People-First Strategy for Seamless Transitions – Sara Masterson, Olympia Hospitality

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Mastering Hotel Onboarding:

Hospitality Daily Podcast



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In this episode, [Sara Masterson](#), President of [Olympia Hospitality](#), shares insights into the process of onboarding new hotels and the importance of culture in hotel management with our host, [Nancy Mendelson](#).

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Music for this show is produced by Clay Bassford of [Bespoke Sound: Music Identity Design for Hospitality Brands](#)

Transcript

Josiah: Yesterday on the show, I shared an excerpt of my conversation with Wil Slickers where I shared why I see so much potential in hotel operations, which is why I'm thrilled to have Nancy Mendelson hosting conversations with Sara Masterson for the rest of this week. Sara is the president of Olympia Hospitality, and in the coming episodes, you're going to get insights into many different aspects of hotel operations in management, which, as I often say here on the show, is where the real magic of hospitality happens. From career development and leadership lessons to the strategies Olympia Hospitality uses across their portfolio, we're going to get into a lot. But today specifically, you're going to learn about Olympia's process when they first take over managing a new hotel. This conversation is going to give you a unique look into the way that they approach business and the way they think about operations. So without further ado, let's get into it.

Nancy:

What an absolute joy it is to be able to spend some quality time today with Sara Masterson, President of Olympia Hospitality. Sara, I so appreciate you being here, especially since you're, what, onboarding four new hotels April 1st?

Sara:

We are. We've got lots of great things going on at Olympia Hospitality. It's a pleasure to join you today, Nancy. Thank you for being here.

Nancy:

What is that process like onboarding for new hotels?

Sara:

You know, it's a lot of information gathering initially, and it's a lot of spending time with the team in the field to make sure that they are comfortable and ready to go, and our goal is always to make it feel like, for the team in the field, that our first day there is no different than the day that they were there previously, just they may be clocking it a different way. But the goal is really to make it as seamless as possible for the group that's doing the work out in the field.

Nancy:

Even though I have been on the other side of working for a brand and having asset managers, you know, Olympia has a very definitive brand presence. How does that work when you're taking on another brand with your brand? I mean, I've always wondered what that's like from your end, from the asset management side.

Sara:

So I think our brand is really more culture focused in the way that we engage with the field, the way we engage with our team members, and the way that we sort of take a creative approach to hospitality and hotel management. But we're not really there to promote our brand, if you will. We're really there to ensure that we are maximizing the value of the brand of whatever asset that we happen to be managing. Our portfolio is

pretty broad in terms of the brand presence and our brand footprint. So we have Marriott Hotels, we have Hilton Hotels, we have Choice Hotels, we have Hyatt Hotels, but we also have a really large group of independent hotels that each have their own sort of operating approach and goals and objectives. Our brand is really second to all of that and is really focused more than anything on the way we engage in process and with the team and the way that we really focus on owner goals and owner expectations. That's our job. Our job is to execute on those goals and expectations and making sure that we're creating a great culture for the team that's in the space doing the work.

Nancy:

But I imagine how you do that and the thoughtfulness with which you onboard and manage these properties has a lot to do with the property's ability and spirit in delivering hospitality to their guests.

Sara:

Without a doubt. I mean, at the, at the end of the day, we are in the people business 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. And so I think we live our brand culture, if you will, in the onboarding and transition process by having a really strong property presence. And we try to be in the space. We want to get to know and engage team members and being really transparent. We want to provide whatever information we have, as timely as we have it, because we know that people are curious and they have questions and they want answers. And the reality is if we don't fill in those gaps, human nature is just to fill in gaps on their own. And we really want sort of truth and transparency to be forward in all of that.

Nancy:

Do you think having been on the other side, because I know you've been on property, I know you've been a GM and I know you've worked in other capacities on property. Do you think that's helped that perspective of having had that experience?

Sara:

Oh, without a doubt. Yeah. I mean, absolutely. This industry is built on experience and your credibility comes from, well, have you done this before? Have you been the one checking people and do you appreciate what that looks like? Have you been the one turning over rooms or dealing with an upset guest or having to run the audit shift because somebody had something, a personal emergency come up? And so I think that's true, not just of me, but really of the team that we deploy out into the field, that we have a relationship with the process. We have a relationship with what their goals and their challenges are because we've been there. We've done that. And that's a huge part of this industry generally.

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