

# The 2015 Annual Hotel Conference - Review

Wednesday 14th October

## Opening Key Note Speaker

*Kevin Roberts, Executive Chairman at Saatchi & Saatchi and Head Coach at Publicis Groupe*



Kevin opened with a storm of a key note speech, and reminded us what the hospitality industry is really about: guests.

- Guests' emotional response should still be at the heart of what we do.
- It's crucial to create a story that they want to be a part of and share with you.
- "Never give the customer what he wants - give him what he never dreamed possible."
- It's about emotion and connection.

## Economic Review

*Trevor Williams, Chief Economist at Lloyds Bank Corporate Markets*



Trevor predicts good times ahead for the service industries: we're bigger and better, and equipped to deal with growth.

- UK economy is now 6% bigger than before the crisis; the services sector is 10% bigger, suggesting it's services - and that means hotels - that are thriving now.
- "The UK has a good chance of remaining a prosperous economy if it plays to its strengths."

## Market Overview

*David Bailey, Senior Director at CBRE Hotels EMEA*



David took us through a tour of the market landscape in the last few years - and forward into the future.

- Trading landscape has become more challenging; GOP has fallen since 2000 from 44% of total revenue to 28% in 2014.
- Profit growth outstrips revenue growth as operators find greater efficiencies - this means healthy increases for the bottom line.

**Opening Plenary: BDRC Brand Margin Presentation & Panel Discussion**  
*Presented by Cris Tarrant, Chief Executive at BDRC Group*  
*Moderated by Matt Costin, Managing Director at On the Move - BDRC Continental*



**Panel:**

**Terri Scriven, Industry Head of Travel at Google**

**Apurva Pratap, Vice President Distribution & Commercial Marketing for Europe at IHG**

**Christopher Michau, Senior Vice President Global Marketing Management at Expedia**

**Paul Johnson, CEO at Kew Green Hotels**

What's in a Name?: This presentation from BDRC offered a unique perspective into brand value informed by use of the results of alternative research methods to investigate consumer perceptions. It was followed by a panel session focussing on the value of a brand.

- Brand drives volume and price premium, and improves consumer opinion. Most people want to buy more and pay more.
- 'Wisdom of the crowd' is unfailingly more accurate than an expert opinion.
- It's essential to conduct a continuous dialogue with customers now we're online; we're always in touch with them.
- We have to work together in the future so that the industry becomes more robust.

Thursday 15th October

**Opening Key Note Speaker**

*Mike Ellwood, Head of Corporate and Commercial Banking at Santander*



Mike got the ball rolling at the second day of the conference by reminding us of the dangers of trying to be all things to all people.

- “Coffee is still the way people want to do business... it’s the coffee that makes the connection.”
- Offer one experience and people who want it will come.
- “Recognise what you’re doing and execute it very ,very well.”

## Disruptive Change

Moderated by Katherine Doggrell, Editor at HDE



### Panel:

**Max Thorne, CEO at SACO**

**Emma Benney, Director of Marketing at Generator Hostels**

**Steve Lowy, Director and Co-Founder at Umi Digital**

Time and Tide: Today's hotel market is fast-paced, highly innovative and highly liquid. Leaders on the crest of the new wave discussed how to understand, keep up with and embrace the change.

- "Millennials are not brand loyal, but they'll sign up to things if they can see they'll get something out of it."
- Disruptive brands will have to work to stay relevant.
- Investors are open to the new players and can see the value.

## Owner Operator

*Moderated by Roddy Watt, CEO at The Buell Group*



### **Panel:**

**Ricky Kapoor, Commercial Director at Buell Group**  
**Felicity Cunliffe-Lister, Proprietor at Swinton Park Hotel**  
**Brenda Collin, Regional Director at Preferred Hotels**  
**Kevin Charity, Director at The Coaching Inn Group**

Independent Rules: In an increasingly brand-dominated market, independent owner operators need to be creative and determined to compete and succeed. This invaluable session offered tips to help hotel owners maximise the performance of their assets in a highly competitive marketplace.

- Hotels/chains need to be different, and to be clear how they are different so that they can set themselves apart from their competitors.
- Loyal guests are your best marketing: they will come back and will send their friends to see you too.
- Don't over-price your rooms, as you will lose volume and ancillary spend on F&B and leisure.
- Know everything you can about your guests - their favourite paper, their child's birthday, the name of their dog - and make sure the staff know too.
- Be aware of why your guest is there. They may not be there out of choice, so help them relax, and make them feel they are not staying in a hotel.

## Development

*Moderated by Mark Finney, Head of International Hotels & Resorts at Colliers*



### **Panel:**

**Nuno Galvao Pinto, Director of Development in Western Europe at Starwood Hotels & Resorts**

**Michael Tomkins, Acquisitions and Development Director at Jansons Property**

**Shona Pushpaharan, Head of Hospitality and Leisure at Clydesdale Bank**

**Paul Blackmore, Managing Director at CIMC**

We listened to experts discuss the hot topics including hot spots in the UK/places to avoid, expansion of sub brands throughout the UK and the effect this will have on the market and the impact of development wider afield and the repercussions for the UK.

- For a long time it's been cheaper and easier to buy hotels than build them up - finally, development is back on the agenda.
- Debt funding is definitely back and available - but only for good deals in good locations with a strong sponsor.
- Slow planning regime continues to harm development; rapidly rising cost of construction continues to contribute to lack of clarity.

**Revenue & Distribution Management**  
*Moderated by Carl Weldon, CEO at HOSPA*



**Panel:**

**Stephen Williams, Sales and Marketing at The Gresham Hotel Group**

**Michael Kessler, VP Global Sales at ReviewPro**

**Michael Heyward, Director at Heyward Hospitality Solutions**

New Tricks for Old Dogs: No longer just about effectively managing volume through distribution channels, clear lines of internal and external communication are key to maximising revenue opportunities. Our industry experts welcomed you to a new age of revenue management.

- We're looking forward to development in revenue management - it's the youngest discipline in hotels.
- How do we go about revenue management? Can it be planned, does it require trial and error - or do we just take a sophisticated guess?

## Finance

*Moderated by Melvin Gold, Owner at Melvin Gold Consulting Ltd*



### Panel:

**Andrew Taylor, Head of Leisure - Retail and Franchise at Nattiest**

**Diane Scott, Business Development Director - Hotels & Healthcare at Lloyds**

**Gustav Bjiorn, Debt Finance Hotels & Hospitality Group at JLL**

**Lionel Benjamin, Director at Topland Group**

Money for Something: This discussion on financing developments gave hoteliers a realistic understanding of how to create and maintain a strong relationship with their lender.

- The financing market is topy but not overheated: there are still opportunities out there.
- Relationships and understanding the customer, and seeing their track record is very important.
- Development is an increasing theme - it's seen as relatively risky but creates new products ready for the 21st Century customer.

## OTAs

*Moderated by Andrew Sangster, Owner at Hotel Analyst*



### **Panel:**

**Brian Reeves, Digital Founder & CEO at GOPPAR**

**Jason Grist, Area Manager at [booking.com](https://www.booking.com)**

**Julie Fawcett, Managing Director at Qbic Hotels**

**Tim Roberts, CEO at AHC Integrated Technologies**

It's Time to Hang Up the Gloves: OTAs are here to stay. Our panel of experts revealed how hoteliers can work together with third parties to maximise performance levels.

- "Why not just talk to your guests?" says Julie Fawcett.
- OTAs do provide a huge range of services for the money you pay.
- A big discussion was held regarding rate parity.

## Capitalising on Your Hotel's Public Space

Moderated by Harry McKinley, Editor at Sleep Magazine



### Panel:

**Andrew Linwood, Head of Design at Areen Hospitality**

**Jon Yantin, Commercial Director at The ONE Group**

**Robbie Bargh, Founder at Gorgeous Group**

**Ben Russell, Acquisitions Director at Ennismore, owners of The Hoxton**

The boundaries between lobbies, restaurants, bars and meeting spaces are blurring. But how can operators maximise non-bedroom revenues whilst creating a holistic experience for their in-house and passing guests?

- The hotel group need to become more flexible in approaching what it can offer in terms of food and beverage.
- Neighbourhood locality is essential.
- Don't underestimate the halo effect of good food and beverage on room sales.

## Talent

*Moderated by Peter Ducker, Institute of Hospitality*



### **Panel:**

**Penny Moore, CEO at Hospitality Action**

**Martin Christian Kent, Executive Director at People 1st**

We joined these leading experts in understanding how to harness talent, who or what support is available for you and your staff and other essential 'people' challenges faced in the hospitality sector.

- Nearly a million staff will be needed in hotels for 2022 - about 25% of which will be managers and skilled workers.
- Is it best to source talent or grow it yourself? Investing in your staff increases loyalty.

## Sales & Marketing

*Moderated by Martin Evans, Managing Director at The Tourism Business*



### **Panel:**

**Mark Britton Jones, Hospitality Director at Verve**

**Petra Clayton, Managing Director at Custard Communications**

**Jo Berrington, VP Brand & Marketing at Yotel**

**Stephen Williams, Group Sales and Marketing at The Gresham Hotel**

Mad Men or Next Gen: Do you look to the past or the future for the most effective sales and marketing techniques? These questions were put to our panel to help you consider, 'Digital vs Traditional,' 'In-House vs Outsourced' and 'Marketing in the 21st Century'.

- 90% of hotels are increasing their digital marketing budget year on year.
- Hoteliers need to control their agencies and outsourcing companies better, especially in areas like digital marketing, where the agency has more expertise than the client.
- No-one knows what's round the corner in terms of technology, but if you understand your customer better in the future than you do currently, you'll succeed - note: no one in the room was wearing an Apple Watch.

## Technology

*Moderated by Alison Dolan, Deputy Managing Director at SKY Business*



### **Panel:**

**Irwin Aldridge, Head of Hospitality at Airangel**

**Tim Brown, Senior Director, Sales Consulting, F&B EMEA at Oracle**

**James Byrne, Director at Eccleston Square Hotel**

**Andrew Rush, Head of Product (Europe) at Elavon**

Tech-Yes: There is no avoiding technology in current hotel operations, but how can it be best deployed to deliver the most successful guest experience? From pre-booking to post-trip review, our tech-xperts discussed how it can be implemented to effectively connect with both guests and employees.

- WiFi has to be free or guests will be grumpy.
- It's important to have personal content available to the room - i.e. allow the guest to pick up with the box set they're watching at home.
- The hotel room must be the guest's own space.

## How Much is My Hotel Worth? Moderated by Rob Seabrook, CBRE



**Panel:**  
**Will Duffey, JLL**  
**Oliver Judge, Hetherley Capital Partners**  
**Graham Dodd, Hilton Worldwide**  
**Andrew Robb, Director of Business Development at Redefine BDL**

Cash Out or Cash In?: Hotel revenues are growing, yields are compressing and the good times are back. So what happens now? Buy, sell or hold? Industry experts offered insight into asset values today and likely trends for tomorrow to help inform your key decisions.

## Procurement

*Moderated by David Clarke, Non-Executive Director*



### **Panel:**

**Paul Connelly, Managing Director at Beacon Purchasing**

**David King, Director at The Energy Desk**

**Andy Badger, Managing Director at Acquire Services**

**Cindy Walters, Purchasing Manager at The Hotel Collection**

Procurement is as important as Revenue Management to a hotels profitability. Traceability, Value, Technology. Procurement is so much more than the best price. Our panel of experts shared how their approach improves hotel performance.