

Delivering the Bare Maximum

An Interview with Jennifer McLennan,
Global Brand Leader, Delta Hotels



The entrance of a Delta Hotel by Marriott

EDITORS' NOTE Jennifer McLennan has had a long career with Marriott and has served as Senior Director, Innovation, Design and Development, Director of Design and Development, Resident Manager at JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa, and Assistant General Manager. McLennan received her M.B.A. with a concentration in strategic design from Philadelphia University and her B.A. in hospitality administration/management from University of New Hampshire at Manchester.



Jennifer McLennan

COMPANY BRIEF One of North America's leading four-star brands, Delta Hotels by Marriott (deltahotels.marriott.com), has more than 60 locations in gateway cities across the U.S., Canada, Europe and Asia, and was acquired by Marriott International in 2015. Delta Hotels' distinct style of simple made perfect provides guests with exactly what they need for a seamless travel experience. The brand's invitingly familiar rooms, free Wi-Fi and convenient dining options offer travelers a comfortable and stylish place to stay. Delta Hotels by Marriott is proud to participate in Marriott Bonvoy, the new name of Marriott's travel program replacing Marriott Rewards®, The Ritz-Carlton Rewards®, and Starwood Preferred Guest® (SPG). The program offers members an extraordinary portfolio of global brands, experiences on Marriott Bonvoy Moments and unparalleled benefits including earning points toward free hotel stays and nights toward Elite status recognition. Efficient design, complimentary water and personalized service are just a few elements that guests can experience at Delta Hotels. Delta Hotels by Marriott has also partnered with Soapbox® to provide premium, sustainable bath amenities that give back to communities around the world. As part of this partnership, Delta Hotels offers in-room amenity kits by Soapbox. Each kit corresponds to a soap donation that helps an area or organization in need. Kits also contain a unique code that guests can use online to look up which regions the donations will help.

Will you discuss the impact of Marriott's purchase of Delta Hotels?

Delta began in 1962, and since that time, the brand expanded from one hotel in British Columbia to a full-service hotel brand across Canada with properties in all of the provinces from the Pacific to the Maritime.

We recognized that there was a unique opportunity for Marriott to acquire the brand because there was an entry level in Marriott International's portfolio of full-service hotels between the Courtyard and Marriott brands.

It has been three years since Marriott acquired Delta and the brand has grown exponentially.

This opportunity delivers a relevant brand experience that drives loyalty among the reliability and well-being segments of frequent business travelers and delivers a profitable economic model that

has allowed us to drive growth for our owners or investors.

Are there consistent characteristics in each Delta Hotel or are the hotels customized within the local communities and markets?

In general, Delta Hotels may have a consistent design in terms of what we offer guests, but from city to city, we try to pull in the local feel.

We are focused on providing seamless flow for our guests throughout the brand, which fosters our guests' ability to achieve the purpose behind their hotel experience. Whether that is business or leisure, we allow them to achieve what they set out to do.

We call it delivering the bare maximum – we are focused on delivering the critical elements that deliver high-impact value for our guests.

In Delta Hotels, we offer free bottled water and free Wi-Fi. The Delta Pantry is a high-end residential kitchen that allows our Marriott Bonvoy guests a chance to keep them in the flow and grab something to eat to start off their day. One can stop by the Pantry on the way to their meeting or when heading back to their room.

Will the growth of the Delta Hotels brand primarily be in the U.S. and Canada or are you focused on other global markets for expansion?

The growth story for this brand is really exciting. We have about 63 Delta Hotels opened globally. In 2019, we have plans to open a new hotel approximately every 14 days.

Much of the expansion has been in the U.S. – we have 12 new hotels in the U.S. this year. However, we are also looking at four new hotels in Europe, three in the U.K. and one in Turkey.

We have two new builds opening in Canada as well, so we're excited about the expansion into global markets for this particular brand.

How does Delta Hotels approach its efforts in regard to corporate responsibility?

In 2018, we were proud to team up with a new amenity partner, Soapbox soaps. They provide premium bath products to our guests worldwide and they donate soap to communities in need worldwide as well. The collaboration between Delta Hotels and Soapbox will provide an estimated 1.4 million bars of soap to communities across the globe as a part of their Buy One Give One program. Each amenity kit will include a unique product code that our guests can enter into their phone or computer and discover exactly where that particular kit's contribution is going.

This project furthers Marriott International's new sustainability and social impact platform, Serve360, which is dedicated to developing opportunities to support sustainable and responsible operations throughout the world.

Our associates are really excited about this program, as are our guests, and it's such a great opportunity for us to be able to give back.

Will you discuss the success you have had in attracting talent to support Delta Hotels' growth?

Our success comes from the focused hours we put into training. As a brand, we have gone back and identified that purposeful service is really where we can make a difference.

When someone comes to a Delta Hotel as an associate, they start off with 10 hours of in-class training time and then spend anywhere from five to 15 hours reinvesting in that training annually.

This training addresses how we respond to, treat and interact with our guests and ensures that our guests receive the purposeful service that they deserve.

How do you focus your time in leading the brand?

I spend much of my time partnering with our development and our design teams as we continue to expand the brand globally. That is one of the best parts of my job.

My background though is centered around operations, and I have worked in operations at many of our different hotels over the past 22 years with the company. We will continue to refine how our operation teaches and inspires our associates to take care of our guests, and enhance the tools we give them to work with. This year, along with growing the brand, we will continue to build out the operations perspectives and standards that will allow our team to deliver on our brand promise of purposeful service, while better preparing us for the growth of the brand. ●