

Sandstone's Strategy

An Interview with Dan Davidson and Holly Breuche, Sandstone Consulting

EDITORS' NOTE Dan Davidson is a long-standing and highly respected figure in the luxury lifestyle travel marketplace, leading Magellan in offering unparalleled value in major destinations around the globe.

Holly Breuche is a multi-faceted industry veteran, having served as General Manager, Director of Sales and Marketing overseeing Revenue Management, as well as Director of Asset Management for properties like The St. Regis Bal Harbour and The St. Regis Washington, DC. She successfully opened seven hotels including The New York Palace, The Setai, and the Quin. Most recently, Breuche oversaw some of New York's most iconic properties as Vice President of Operations for Highgate – which operates nearly 12 percent of the city's total hotel room inventory.

COMPANY BRIEF Sandstone Consulting brings a fresh approach to an underserved niche: large scale travel negotiations. Formed by two veterans of the hospitality industry, Sandstone is built upon more than 50 years of combined experience. Dan Davidson, Founder and Chairman of Magellan Luxury Hotels, and Holly Breuche, former Vice President of Highgate Hotels, are harnessing their vast networks and expertise to elevate the group travel experience.

What was your vision in creating Sandstone Consulting?

Breuche: Dan and I have long enjoyed a synergistic professional partnership. Though our collaborations always served our respective businesses well, the inspiration for Sandstone came when Dan was tapped to negotiate a group booking of 26,000 room nights for two years on behalf of an organization. We decided simultaneously that our skill sets and extensive networks would support a successful agreement on behalf of both the organization and the hotel.

It became apparent that there was a gap in the market. No one was addressing this specific challenge, and we were uniquely suited to close the divide. The scale of these types of bookings makes them significantly more complex by nature. By focusing on large-scale groups, we make full use of our backgrounds to deliver valuable solutions for both our clients and partner hotels. The relationships and knowledge that we cultivated over the years allows us to approach these negotiations from a bird's eye view. This sharpened perspective spans all sides of the conversation.

We decided to create Sandstone, which is a nod to both land and sea – the great masses voyagers traverse. Because sandstone rock is



Dan Davidson



Holly Breuche

formed through a blend of multiple elements, it is considered a stone of creativity. Metaphysically, it strengthens relationships within groups and helps with focus. It encourages balance, helps one discern truth, and offers clarity when making decisions. As we're aggregating multiple components to build unshakable foundations for our clients and partners, Sandstone embodies all of our values and goals.

What services will Sandstone offer its clients and partners?

Breuche: Sandstone Consulting is dedicated to hospitality sourcing for large-scale groups and meetings, constituting 1,000+ room nights. Our expertise makes us the most competitive negotiators in the business. This delivers unmatched access to the world's most extraordinary destinations.

In addition to site selection and contract negotiations for groups, we assist with agreements for corporate transient rates. Although our focus is on large-scale groups, we remain proactive for our clients, anticipating and responding to shifting ground.

In this landscape, we understand that we must be dynamic. By working with us, clients get more than great negotiations. Our passion, determination, conviction and expertise ensure that they get the attention and "high touch" level of service that delivers results. Our business is to help both our clients and our partner hotels, and we bridge the best connections for mutual benefit.

How do you define the target market for Sandstone Consulting and where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth?

Breuche: Our target market is mega-sized groups, meetings and programs across all segments. We are adding some new layers to this business model, however. We will keep those close to the vest, knowing they may serve as "secret weapons" to our and our clients' success.

We have already seen strong momentum as we raise awareness in the industry. We will

continue to take a consultative approach and are personally connecting with our partners to share the details of our services as we grow.

How do you differentiate Sandstone Consulting in the industry?

Davidson: Sandstone is gritty. Our relationships, tenacity, and good old-fashioned grit – Holly and I stick with things long after we master them which makes us stand above and apart. Most importantly, however, is our collective conation. It's an obscure word referenced in one of our favorite books, *Self-Made in America*, by John McCormack. He defines it as "the will to succeed, the quest for success, the attitude that 'to stop me you'll have to kill me', that elusive 'fire in the belly' that manifests itself in drive, enthusiasm, excitement, and single-mindedness in pursuit of a goal – any goal."

Furthermore, Sandstone is committed to giving back to the community and is actively involved with the organization Oceana. After all, how can we build solid foundations without first protecting our natural resources? Oceana is an incredible organization that has protected over 3.5 million miles of ocean since 2001. Before they started Oceana, the founders learned that less than 0.5 percent of all resources spent by environmental nonprofit groups in the U.S. went to ocean advocacy. They were the first group to work exclusively to protect and restore the oceans on a global scale.

From linen reuse programs to entire hotel brands now banning plastic straws, our industry has made and can continue to make hugely impactful strides in protecting the sea. We offer our support by donating a percentage of every confirmed booking to Oceana's conservation efforts.

What are your key priorities for Sandstone Consulting as you build the business?

Breuche: Long term, Sandstone's goals are simple. Our mission is to bring new revenue streams to hotels while simultaneously offering value to our clients through exceptional experiences at the best hotels across the globe.

Short term, Sandstone's top priorities include a website launch in the near future, as well as ongoing outreach to potential partners. Our contacts are not a faceless database; they're a collection of friends and trusted colleagues, and we understand that each person and their needs are singular. You won't find us doing mass marketing. Instead, we've been engaging in meaningful connections to uncover new ways to help others in an exceedingly demanding marketplace. We believe in the confidence of personal contact in an age where that is almost extinct and take relationship building very seriously. ●