

LODGING

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Embracing Challenges

INSIGHTS AND INSPIRATION

FROM MARIBETH BISIENERE'S

30-YEAR HOSPITALITY CAREER

WITH DISNEY

“WE HAVE WOMEN THAT ARE IN EVERY TYPE OF LEADERSHIP ROLE YOU CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE. I FEEL LIKE WE'RE REPRESENTED ACROSS THE BOARD IN ALL AREAS OF OUR INDUSTRY NOW. SO, WE'VE COME A LONG WAY.”

MARIBETH BISIENERE

SVP - Resorts, Transportation, Premium Services, Food & Beverage, and Merchandise
Walt Disney World Resort



HR INSIGHTS

From Representation to Results

What hotel HR can learn from women and minority leaders

by **KATIE SCHORN**

In hospitality, people are the product. Every guest experience is shaped by the teams we hire, train, and retain. That reality puts hotel HR leaders at the center of the industry's most important work right now: building workplaces that reflect the guests we serve and give every employee a real chance to grow.

As more women and minority executives step into senior leadership roles, the impact is becoming clear. This shift is not just about representation at the top. It is changing how hotels recruit talent, develop managers, and define what progress looks like across the organization.

For HR leaders, these executives offer practical lessons on how diversity translates into stronger operations and better business outcomes.



KATIE SCHORN

EXPANDING THE TALENT PIPELINE

Many women and minority leaders in hospitality began their careers on property, often in hourly or frontline roles. That perspective matters. Leaders who understand the barriers that entry-level employees face tend to push for hiring practices that look beyond traditional resumes and networks.

From an HR standpoint, this approach often shows up in partnerships with community organizations, hospitality schools, and workforce development programs that reach underrepresented

talent. It also means reassessing job requirements that unintentionally limit candidates, such as rigid degree expectations for roles where experience and potential matter more.

The result is a wider, more resilient talent pipeline at a time when labor shortages remain a reality for much of the industry.

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT

Representation in leadership also changes how development is approached. Many women and minority executives speak openly about mentors who advocated for them and moments when opportunity came down to someone taking a chance.

HR teams can turn those experiences into systems. Formal mentorship and sponsorship programs help ensure that high-potential employees are supported before they disengage or leave the industry. Clear career pathways, transparent promotion criteria, and consistent performance feedback reduce the influence of bias, whether intentional or not.

When employees can see leaders who look like them and understand how advancement works, retention improves. That stability has a direct effect on service quality and operating costs.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE CULTURES ON PROPERTY

Diversity efforts often stall when they are treated as corporate initiatives rather

than operational priorities. Leaders who come from diverse backgrounds tend to emphasize inclusion at the property level, where culture is felt most strongly.

For HR, that means equipping managers with practical tools. Inclusive leadership training should go beyond awareness and focus on daily behaviors: how schedules are assigned, how feedback is delivered, how conflict is handled, and whose voices are heard in meetings.

It also means listening. Regular employee surveys, listening sessions, and exit interviews provide insight into whether policies are working as intended. Data helps HR leaders move diversity conversations from intent to accountability.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE FUTURE OF HOSPITALITY

Guests are paying attention. They expect the hospitality industry to reflect the diversity of the communities it operates in and the travelers it serves. At the same time, younger workers are choosing employers based on values as much as wages or titles.

Women and minority executives are helping redefine leadership in hospitality by showing that inclusion and performance are not competing goals. They are deeply connected. Teams that feel respected and supported are more engaged, more adaptable, and more likely to stay.

For hotel HR leaders, the takeaway is clear. Diversity work is no longer a side initiative or a response to social pressure. It is a core business strategy that affects recruitment, retention, culture, and brand reputation.

Progress on the labor front will not come from quick fixes. It will come from sustained effort, informed by leaders who understand the workforce from the ground up. As more women and minority executives shape the future of hospitality, HR has a unique opportunity to turn their insights into lasting change across the industry.

● *Katie Schorn is founder and CEO of Transformation Hospitality Solutions, a woman-owned staffing company specializing in placing high-performing talent—ranging from task force and short-term solutions to direct hire—across operations, food and beverage, sales, marketing, accounting, and leadership roles.*