

# Shaking up the pecking order with Jannes Soerensen

[August 13, 2019](#)

**Described by Skift's Colin Nagy as "one of the most articulate and passionate people I've met in recent memory", [Jannes Soerensen](#) is [The Beaumont's](#) superlative inducing, trailblazing GM. Famed for being one of the youngest to achieve such a pedigree, we asked him what it takes to be successful in this business...**

**As one of the luxury industry's youngest GMs, you inspire a new generation. Who has influenced and mentored you throughout your journey?**

I was lucky in that I have encountered some amazing mentors, who taught me some fundamental lessons in how to look after guests and how to manage teams effectively. My route to becoming a General Manager was perhaps more unusual than for most GMs: I started on the concierge desk at [The Adlon](#) in Berlin, before progressing in the same department to the [Four Seasons George V](#) in Paris, the [Arts](#) in Barcelona and then [The Plaza](#) in New York. The experience I gained as a concierge is fundamental in how I approach the role of GM. From some of the best concierges in the world, I learnt in-depth what people want, how they feel, how this makes them behave and how ultimately to enrich their lives – this is important, whether you are dealing with guests or your team.

When it comes to General Managers, I have been incredibly fortunate to work alongside several true industry icons over the years: Jean Van Daalen was my first GM at The Adlon in Berlin, Didier Le Calvez at the FS George V in Paris and later at Le Bristol, Victor Clavell at The Arts in Barcelona, Shane Krige at The Plaza in NYC and Nathalie Seiler-Hayez at [The Connaught](#) in London. And then there is Jeremy King, who, as part of [Corbin & King](#), opened The Beaumont. I have never met anyone who takes such a proprietorial approach in the running of all his businesses,

and his vision, impeccable sense of taste and his quest for perfection in every detail were truly inspiring.

**The service at The Beaumont is renowned. What do you think is the key to a successful team, is there anything you do differently?**

The team here at The Beaumont truly cares about delivering an outstanding stay experience to each and every guest and they are fully entrusted to deliver on this. They know that hospitality is all about meaningful relationships and real interactions.

I was brought up to trust people. And you need to give them a stable environment and the freedom to be the best they can be. I have worked with a number of senior leaders in different countries, who were coincidentally all very much of the same mind-set: they saw the potential in people, they trusted them, they believed they would rise to the challenge and they empowered them to make it work. Today I apply this to my team: believe in the talent that surrounds you, encourage them and guide them to take ownership of how they perform and they will do so at the highest level because they want to and not because they are required to.

I believe that it is important to create teams of people that are not all the same, but work well and coherently together, complementing each other's styles, characters and skill sets, and able collectively to reach a consensus. As the manager of the Executive Committee, it is my job to lead, to set the values, to pick the right idea in the room and to nurture a culture of debate, where people contribute, and show how much they care. The Executives are the backbone of the hotel and it is so important that they are all committed to striving to achieve what we have set out as our goals and not to be afraid to make the right decisions. This team needs to be seen to be credible and visible.

The members of staff are everything in a hotel, whilst the design of the hotel and the rooms should be compelling but should not impose. The reason guests come back time and time again is because they remember

people, not things, and because they are remembered. I recall my first day at the Hotel Arts Barcelona many years ago, expecting to be given a list of job tasks and an ops manual, only to be told that 'the most important thing is that you are happy at your work – that's it'. This was the priority (although the ops manual clearly had its place!) and this approach has always stuck with me. Happy employees are the best employees. Sincere happiness is contagious and for a guest to have somebody at a hotel regard them with an attitude that says 'I'm happy you're here' and to show they genuinely care is the most important thing of all.

### **Our events are all about building lifelong relationships, how does this intersect with your role?**

The other fundamental skill I picked up along my journey is one of cultivating relationships. By the time I became head of Rooms Division at the Connaught here in London and later at [Le Bristol](#) in Paris, I had learnt that meaningful relationships are made one guest at a time, one travel professional at a time, one member of staff at a time. It is vital to build trust and this is a slow process, but so, so important in our business. Agents book their loyal clients into our hotel because experience has shown they can trust us to look after them; guests come back time and time again because they feel a personal connection with the people at the hotel. We don't have a guest relations position at The Beaumont because I feel everyone is in the role of managing guest relations, and that starts with me.

### **What are the biggest issues in luxury hospitality right now and what can we expect from the future?**

We have such an overload on information, intelligence and resources that we have to challenge ourselves to use what matters most to us and our guests. I feel hoteliers and owners can easily hide behind the technology, the reports and the procedures, and need to remember the soft skills. We spend endless resource in the industry benchmarking ourselves against our competition on all sorts of key performance indicators, but these

exercises never reveal the real truth about the unique experiences we deliver to our guests.

Staff recruitment is a perennial issue but we are lucky at The Beaumont that turnover is low. We have a very large number of colleagues that have been with us since the opening five years ago.

For an independent hotel such as ours in an environment of big and bigger hotel brands, it can be challenging to make your voice heard above the large groups and to stand out – that is where the life-long relationships with the agencies come in – although there is clearly a desire amongst our guests for a more independent, non-branded experience. The challenge comes in finding each other!

Finally, I feel that luxury hospitality needs to lead by example and take responsibility where the health of the planet is concerned. For many years, spoiling and material luxury was a large element of what hospitality was deemed to be all about, but it is up to us to demonstrate that excess is not luxury.