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UP and COMERS

The editors of *Hotel Business* have selected eight rising stars in the hotel industry and interviewed them about their career starts, current responsibilities and plans for the future. From industry associations and management companies to ownership firms and brands, these young individuals have already made an impact on their respective companies and are poised to fulfill leadership positions within the hospitality industry.

Who knows... maybe these Up & Comers will one day be on *Hotel Business'* 10 to Watch list.

—Christina Trauthwein



Binita Patel

Young Professional Director
AAHOA

Like many in this industry, Binita Patel is the offspring of a hotelier. She can recall answering phones and stripping beds in her dad's Days Inn as a child, before earning a master's degree in real estate finance & investment from Cornell University. She's served as an associate investment manager at Beacon Hospitality Partners LLC and a manager at Ramsfield Hospitality Finance, and is now a VP at HMB Hotels, the family company.

Patel is also actively engaged in the Asian American Hotel Owners Association (AAHOA), where she serves as the young professional director. Patel's father had always been an active AAHOA member, and she attended many events over the years. "You make friends with

people," she said, "and, at some point, I realized that I was still going to conferences and others were not."

Patel noted her Cornell Alumni network is a powerful tool and, in her tenure as the young professional director (until 2017), she aims to strengthen AAHOA's network. "People are so responsive to the Cornell association, and there's no reason why AAHOA shouldn't be able to do the same," she said. "For years, it was the association where people went to be social. Now, I think they've done so much to change that mindset and bring more young people into it. The Young Professionals program needs to be an incubator for AAHOA's next leadership."

Patel and the 10 others on the committee have hosted regional focus groups to determine what young professionals most need and want, and has a goal to strengthen professional development. "It's the one thing we've been trying to bring to the table, whether it's developing leadership skills, understanding work styles or being able to interface between the first generation hoteliers and the staff," said Patel. "It's about being more comfortable and understanding what it means to be a leader, whether it's at your own organization, on the local or state level, or on the AAHOA platform."

—Nicole Carlino



Stanton Leddy

VP, Business Development
Presidian Hotels & Resorts

The grandson of a well-known Texas boot maker, Stanton Leddy, VP, business development, Presidian Hotels & Resorts, compares his family's customer service approach to managing the finances and operations of his company's hotel portfolio. His grandfather founded Fort Worth, TX-based M.L. Leddy's, which has provided handmade cowboy boots since 1922. "Each pair of boots are special to the individual," said Leddy. "We approach deals, management and investors with a customizable and flexible mindset as well."

San Antonio, TX-based Presidian Hotels & Resorts specializes in development, historic asset conversions and management. Leddy's father, Drake Leddy, founded the company in 1989.

With the launch of its management division in 1999, Presidian's portfolio has expanded to include brands such as Hilton, Starwood, IHG and Marriott.

Stanton Leddy joined Presidian in 2009, starting as an operations analyst. Leddy quickly climbed the ranks. His responsibilities have included statistical analysis, forecasting enhancement, investor relations, task force implementation, SOP development and portfolio management. Leddy has gained experience at all levels of hotel operations, including multi-property management.

"Our balanced approach is key to providing exceptional service and maintaining premium market share in the markets we operate, which translates to optimal bottom lines and maximum ROI for our owners and partners," he said.

Leddy's long-term goal is to generate superior returns for owners, investors and lenders. "I want to grow Presidian into one of the premier management companies in the industry," he said. "We have the know-how and performance results to drive us to the top."

Leddy credits his father for teaching him about the hotel industry. "My greatest mentor has been my father," he said. "He is such an icon in the industry in terms of development, management and how to properly and manage an investor group."

—Matthew Marin



Ravi Patel

President
Hawkeye Hotels

They say timing is everything and, for Ravi Patel, president of Hawkeye Hotels, it certainly was a contributing factor to the company's rapid growth.

Patel joined the Iowa City, IA-based company—which got its start in 1982 when his parents, Bob and Angie, bought a roadside hotel in Mena, AR—in 2006 after completing college. It was just prior to the credit crisis in 2008 but, while most companies were standing pat, Patel believed it was the perfect time for expansion.

"I saw a real opportunity to build and buy, as assets at that point in time were extremely undervalued for obvious reasons. At my insistence, we continued to build, commissioning over 40 new projects, including new-builds and

acquisitions. This made us one of the most active hoteliers during the economic downturn," he said.

Hawkeye, which now has more than 1,500 employees, includes a portfolio of some 75 hotels in 16 states, with major brands such as Hilton, Marriott, Starwood and IHG. Furthermore, Patel noted the company has controllable assets exceeding \$600 million, and is estimated to have a 20-year impact of more than \$5 billion in its home state of Iowa.

Patel talked about some of his favorite aspects of the business: "One of the best parts of working with any of my business ventures is meeting and interacting with people from all walks of life. The hospitality industry, in particular, is perfect for this."

He further added, "My life philosophy is to do great things with good people, and I really see that at play in our company."

Patel noted, moving forward, the company will continue to buy and build when it makes sense. "I've done my best to put our company on the path to sustainable growth and, as of now, we are certainly heading on a very positive growth trajectory. It is our goal to increase our presence in larger markets here in the U.S. and grow to be a more than billion-dollar company. I'm confident we will achieve that goal over the next decade," he said.

—Dennis Nessler



David Perrin

VP
Hunter Hotel Advisors

For many young executives, their entrance into hospitality can come about very much by chance as they look to any means possible to make their mark. However, in the case of David Perrin, VP, Hunter Hotel Advisors, he was leaving nothing to chance and, when the opportunity presented itself, he didn't hesitate.

Perrin joined Hunter in February 2011 following an internship with CB Richard Ellis (CBRE), where he worked in its Dallas Investment Properties Institutional Sales office. During his tenure at CBRE, Perrin gained some exposure to the hospitality group, and the rest is history.

"I really enjoyed—and was much more interested in—the hospitality books that

I was looking at and working with while at CBRE than the industrial. It's much sexier of an asset. It's not just four walls and a ceiling, and how big the ceiling fans are. There are a lot more integral parts in the business that are a lot more interesting than that industrial stuff," he said.

Prior to officially joining Hunter, Perrin—who graduated from SMU in 2010—interned with the company while in New York, and got an even greater understanding of the business. "The more I worked on each deal, I saw how each one was different. I found it a more interesting asset than any other real estate I'd worked on so far," he said.

Perrin has been instrumental in getting the company's Washington, DC, office off the ground, having moved to the area in June 2012 to run the office with SVP Kyle Stevenson. Perrin noted the pair executed over \$60 million in transactions last year alone.

Perrin was named VP of the company in July, when he moved back to Hunter's Atlanta headquarters. Perrin—who has essentially provided support for the entire company and its seven U.S. offices—noted, in the next few years, he expects to move more into the individual brokerage capacity and will be focused on building his own network in the Southeast.

—Dennis Nessler



Ryan Rivett

President/COO
My Place Hotels of America

Ryan Rivett has apparently found his place with My Place, the new franchise brand he launched earlier this year with his grandfather Ron Rivett, the hospitality entrepreneur responsible for Super 8 Motels, which he cofounded in 1974 with the late Dennis Brown.

The younger Rivett, serving as the economy, extended-stay brand's president/COO, is like the proverbial acorn that has not fallen far from the tree.

"I've kind of grown up in this. I can recall when I was younger going to Super 8 conventions and at seven, eight years old sitting through time-management seminars and competing in bed-making competitions," he noted.

Early "experience" aside, before

taking on My Place Hotels of America, Rivett concentrated on construction, development and multifamily projects within the family organization known as The Rivett Group, a holding company with several avenues of property development that was formed after Super 8 was sold to Wyndham Worldwide precursor HFS, Inc. "That was my lead in to hospitality," he said.

A solid background stands to serve him well as the new-construction brand has gained strong momentum. There are already 11 My Place hotels open, with two more due this month and next. There were another 10 in the pipeline at press time.

The brand offers several iterations, including 64-, 83- and 46-room properties. The average footprint is 1.1 to 1.3 acres.

"We've not put any boundaries or limitations on markets for My Place," said Rivett. "We've refined our perspective of expansion to developing clusters, to developing corridors, creating multiple impressions. If we see opportunity in one market, we look immediately to surrounding markets to find out where the next one will go."

Competing with midscale on quality and economy on price, Rivett said, "We've found a space that is unoccupied today that My Place is able to fill."

—Stefani C. O'Connor



Dupree Scovell

Managing Director
Woodbine Investment/Development Corp.



King Scovell

VP/Development

Brothers Dupree and King Scovell, managing director at Dallas-based Woodbine Investment Corp. and VP/development at Woodbine Development Corp., respectively, are part of a family legacy that knows good dirt—and good partners—when it sees it.

John Scovell, their father and the company's president/CEO, put that knowledge into play when he joined Hunt Oil Co.'s real estate division in 1972 and founded Woodbine with Dallas businessman Ray L. Hunt the following October.

Over four decades, the company has immersed itself in the design, development, construction and asset management of 15 million-plus sq. ft. of commercial space and counts more

than 6,000 guestrooms at 11 hotels among its efforts, with an additional 8,000-plus rooms renovated.

Recently, Woodbine partnered with InterMountain Management to deliver a Residence Inn by Marriott to the master-planned community of Springwoods Village near Houston. The ground-up project is the first in a trio of select-service hotels Woodbine is bringing to the \$10-billion, 1,800-acre mixed-use development.

Woodbine also plans to develop a full-service hotel in the Village's 60-acre CityPlace to complement its office, retail and dining components. "The full-service hotel also comes with the option to develop one or two more full-service hotels," said King Scovell. The project is one of a series of developments the brothers are involved in across several states and a variety of brands.

"Three years ago, we were in two states—Texas and Arizona—and we set a goal around that time to say we need to be able to have a lot more diversity, both in brand and geography. And, as we sit today, we'll have projects in eight different states," said Dupree Scovell, emphasizing, "The lion's share of our work is in hospitality; that's by design."

—Stefani C. O'Connor



Adam Suleman

Principal, EVP
Equinox Hospitality

A second-generation hotelier, Adam Suleman, principal and EVP, Equinox Hospitality, never intended to join the family business. He earned a bachelor's degree in finance and economics from Santa Clara University, studied International Business at Imperial College in London and completed the certificate program from Cornell in Hotel Real Estate Investments and Asset Management.

"In high school and college, I was looking for my niche," said Suleman. "I loved working with people. Although I was a finance and economics major in college, I worked at Starwood Hotels & Resorts for five years—and I found my calling."

Suleman began his career in hospitality by developing operational experience with the W Hotels brand. His

hotel résumé includes luxury properties in New York City, New Orleans and San Francisco, where he grew up.

Five years ago, Suleman was exploring the next step in his career. He decided to combine his hotel operations background with his real estate and financial knowledge for his father's San Francisco-based hotel ownership, management, acquisition and development company. Abdul M. Suleman, a former senior executive for Hyatt, founded Equinox Hospitality in the early '90s and currently serves as the company's president and CEO.

Today, Suleman identifies high-potential assets, structures deals and maximizes value for Equinox Hospitality. "I look at things with a dual perspective operationally but also financially," he said. "In the industry, people rarely have both areas of expertise."

Suleman, who serves on IHG's Emerging Leaders Council, credits his father for his mentorship. "My father has been my CEO and boss, but he's also my friend," said Suleman. "I feel fortunate within the family business. He's taught me a lot of the same lessons he learned while emerging in the industry that are consistent today in regard to ethics and hard work. As long as you represent yourself as honest, you will meet like-minded people and make strong partnerships."

—Matthew Marin