

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN HOTEL + LODGING ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2017

# LODGING

## CHANGING OF THE GUARD

**AHLA'S NEW CHAIR  
TALKS THE STATE  
OF THE INDUSTRY**



A DEEP DIVE  
INTO THE  
**TOP 25**  
U.S. HOTEL  
MARKETS

**FORWARD  
MARCH**

HIRING VETERANS  
MAKES GOOD  
BUSINESS SENSE

**GIVING IT  
AWAY**

THE IMPACT OF  
COMPLIMENTARY  
ITEMS ON YOUR  
BOTTOM LINE

MARK CARRIER  
PRESIDENT  
B.F. SAUL COMPANY HOSPITALITY GROUP  
2017 AHLA CHAIR OF THE BOARD

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AMERICAN HOTEL + LODGING ASSOCIATION

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WEB EXCLUSIVE

**Top Ways to Reduce Hospitality Fraud Losses in 2017**  
The travel and hospitality industries are notoriously high-risk. Factors like high average ticket amounts and long fulfillment time horizons compound with high average chargeback rates to create above average losses to fraud. But hotels don't need to settle for surrendering more revenue to fraud in 2017. Instead, lodging merchants can reduce fraud losses by addressing the different areas of a transaction, each of which must be looked at comprehensively to address fraud.



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# FRONT DESK

NEWS, IDEAS, AND INSIGHTS



SUCCESS STORY

## Varied Interests

BY INTENTIONALLY DIVERSIFYING CORAL HOSPITALITY'S PORTFOLIO, LEE WEEKS FINDS THAT HAPPY MEDIUM BETWEEN SPORTS AND RESORTS BY KAITLYN NJORGE

**TENNIS, SURFING, SWIMMING, GOLF**—name a sport and Lee Weeks has probably done it. Throughout his college years, Weeks could be found lifeguarding and teaching swim lessons at local clubs. His love of sports led him to pursue a degree in business management and recreation. "I'm just a sports nut," says Weeks, chief executive officer of Naples, Fla.-based management company, Coral Hospitality. Today, Weeks is heavily involved in the resort and club management industry, where he has been able to combine his love for all things sports with the hospitality business. "I wanted to pursue fields that would allow me to continue to grow in the areas that were passions of

"I wanted to pursue fields that would allow me to continue to grow in the areas that were passions of mine. I think hospitality and recreation are just a natural fit in that regard."

— LEE WEEKS, CEO  
CORAL HOSPITALITY

mine," he says. "I think hospitality and recreation are just a natural fit in that regard." After working his way up to the general manager's role at a local country club after graduating from college, Weeks set his sights on resorts. The resort business was a logical progression, and is what landed Weeks in Maui, Hawaii. In the Aloha State, Weeks began his career as the head of recreation for Hyatt Hotels. He climbed up the ladder, thriving in different disciplines within the company, including management positions overseeing five-star dining and nightclubs, front office, and housekeeping. Weeks was then promoted to assistant rooms executive, where he made the move to Atlanta, Ga. Various promotions and opportunities landed Weeks with the Ritz Carlton in Naples, Fla. Once again, the Aloha State came calling, and Weeks returned

to Hawaii as vice president of operations for the Grand Wailea Resort. Finally, an opportunity to take on the role as vice president of operations at the all-new Atlantis Resort in Paradise Island, Bahamas, offered the professional growth Weeks was looking for to be able to pull him from his beloved Hawaii.



### HE'S GOT RANGE

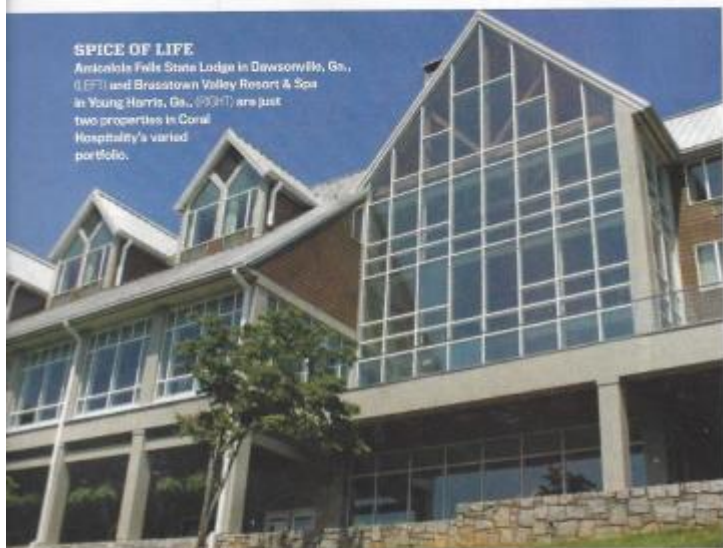
Coral Hospitality CEO Lee Weeks developed a diverse hotel portfolio to safeguard his company against an economic downturn.

With a keen understanding of multiple disciplines under his belt, Weeks felt ready to reach for the next rung. This was when he reconnected with John Ayres, who, at the time, was the owner of Coral Beach Hotels & Clubs. They initially met during a committee meeting in Naples, Fla., where Ayres was looking for a partner with whom he could create something fresh. At the same time, Weeks was looking for the chance to start something big. Together, they founded Coral Hospitality. "I brought forth the golf side of the equation to complement John's hotel experience," says Weeks. "We put those two things together and that's how Coral Hospitality was formed." →

FRONT DESK

SPICE OF LIFE

Amicalola Falls State Lodge in Dawsonville, Ga., (left) and Brasstown Valley Resort & Spa in Young Harris, Ga., (right) are just two properties in Coral Hospitality's varied portfolio.



Since launching Coral Hospitality in 1999, Weeks and Ayres have worked hard to diversify the company's portfolio. This was a smart move, and likely saved the company during the Great Recession in 2008. "We were working on a

variety of condo and hotel projects when the real estate market fell apart in 2008 and 2009. We had 12 projects in the pipeline at the time, and that number was growing. Having golf courses, state-run resorts, and high-end resorts in our

portfolio helped us stay afloat and today, that diversity has become a cornerstone of our business."

An eye for diverse projects is what eventually led Coral Hospitality into managing state parks, lodges, and resorts. In 2005, the North Georgia Mountains Authority was in need of a new hospitality management company. They conducted a nationwide search of more than 100 companies to find their match and selected Coral Hospitality based on their experience managing multiple diverse assets.

"We were offered the opportunity to manage the resorts that were located within the states parks. We didn't go in saying, 'We're going to manage the state parks themselves,'" Weeks explains. "We just seized the opportunity when it presented itself and do a great job. We started out small, and because we did well, they offered us more and more. Eventually, we landed the opportunity to manage the entire complex, including the park lands and natural resources. I think the driving force behind our success is having a passion for things like hospitality, natural resources, recreation, and sports. So, it's just been a natural evolution."

Working with state parks and the government entities that are responsible for them has its own set of challenges. They run a great deal like country →

## GOOD ADVICE

LEE WEEKS, CEO OF CORAL HOSPITALITY, OFFERS ADVICE ON OPERATING A PROPERTY LIKE A STATE PARK.

- 1 UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S MORE THAN JUST A PROPERTY.** "You need to have a passion for the natural resources you're going to be dealing with, because the whole impetus for a state park is that they are the government's way of preserving these very special lands and resources. It's their way of saying, 'This will not be developed. It will be preserved for generations to come for the enjoyment of all people, not just the ones who can afford it.' So, you're going to be a part of a generational process of maintaining and enhancing the natural resources, and everything that you do needs to keep the future generations in mind."
- 2 LEARN HOW TO MANAGE A DESTINATION RESORT.** "You need to be good at destination resorts, because they're usually not in places where there's a large metropolis and thriving business around them. They're usually well outside cities and towns, so your marketing needs to be tip-top to be able to reach people and attract them to come see you."
- 3 WORK HAND-IN-HAND WITH STATE AGENCIES.** "Along with normal marketing techniques, you're going to have to be flexible when working with the state. You have to team up with all affiliated agencies of the government in order to get the word out about your destination and your property."



## TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

During a panel at HX: The Hotel Experience in New York City, hospitality experts discussed issues surrounding education and training. Here's what they had to say about career development:



"It's your own personal responsibility to steward your career and make yourself accessible to opportunities, but it's the manager's responsibility too, to help out and seek out what people really love, and give them opportunities to shine in those areas."

**SHANNON RINELLA**

Senior Director, Learning & Career Development, Interstate Hotels & Resorts



"Have a conversation with your supervisor...Come with an idea of where you want to go next and ask for help getting there. We like people who take calculated risks, stretch, and do a little bit more than just the day-to-day job."

**MARK BOCCIA**

Vice President, Learning + Development, Marriott International



"We believe it's best to take a portfolio approach to career development. You build a brand of all these competencies that progressively over time will help you achieve whatever your vision of success might be."


**MIKE NALLEY**

Assistant Professor, University of Central Florida

clubs, with directors and boards as the final decision makers. For Weeks, meeting these challenges includes making sure Coral is ever mindful of the great responsibility of managing states' assets, and being flexible and nimble enough to work together in this public/private partnership.



Today, Coral Hospitality manages numerous hotels, resorts, state parks, and golf clubs across the Southeastern states, hosting a variety of amenities including golf, tennis, ziplining, fishing, and more.

Maintaining diverse assets is key to Coral Hospitality's success. The end goal is simple, yet not easily attained. "Making sure that we are creating a positive guest experience with our employee training is crucial, because they are the key to creating memorable experiences," Weeks says. "Our company culture allows all employees to openly have discussions and shine a light on any service issues. After all, they are the ones on the front line with our guests and they must feel a sense of ownership when it comes to the business." ❁



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