

Boutique Hotel Association (BLLA) Addresses the Importance of Keeping Boutique Hotel Properties as Independent Hotels

The impressive spirit of wisdom and leadership that exists around the world to remain independent is alive and well and being celebrated consistently

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- With the recent announcement of Hyatt purchasing Dream Hotels, this is the exact moment to reflect on big chains buying out smaller boutique brands. It may be a good move for the owner of the Dream brand, who has spent many years building up the brand value while

keeping ownership of the assets at bay [as each property is owned by others, with just a few exceptions]. Hyatt is also gaining a lifestyle group of properties to add to its portfolio. While this may be a good move for both, independent hotels and small brands are most likely to reject offers to join a larger group if they are already successful in their markets.

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Jayson Seidman, Founder & Managing Partner, Sandstone



A snapshot of the boutique community at the 2022 Owners Conference | Photo credit: Linda Kasian Photography

Big chains/brands certainly have their spot in the history of the hospitality industry, while boutique hotels have been around for decades. They are, in many cases, the crux of what makes a hotel so desirable to the traveling public. The major brands created their soft brands specifically to try and replicate the ethos of these properties as the traveling public began to prefer a different experience around 2010 or so. If not for inspiration from the

boutiques, the interest in owning and operating a hotel would die down, which is exactly the opposite of what is happening today.

BLLA and its supporters are standing up to unify the world's independent boutique hotels and businesses, and the movement gains momentum every year over the past 13 years. The spirit of smaller hotels and brands standing up to big corporations to stake their place sends a message of unity and resilience. The story is still being written, and BLLA is proud to be at the forefront of this movement. Unity is possible, not everywhere, but certainly in hospitality. We resonate with today's choice of Time Magazine's Person of the Year in some way. It strikes a chord that all things are possible.

The Case for Boutique:

Much of today's mainstream hospitality culture comes from small-scale properties. Incorporating coworking spaces, music and art venues, and F&B services began in independent properties. Big hotel chains catch on to the successful techniques of smaller businesses and attempt to redesign their strategies to fit a larger market. They borrow endless inspiration from the success of boutique operations or simply buy them out (we're being gentle here). However, the case for boutique brands is stronger than ever in today's market. Community connection, adaptability and resilience, and creativity are a few of the areas that make boutique hotels transcend other hospitality experiences today.

The list of qualities that make boutique hospitality extraordinary is endless. The Boutique Lifestyle Leaders Association builds a platform for these creative endeavors to thrive and for driven entrepreneurs to expand their network and global influence. Through collaborative spaces, provocative conversations, and well-deserved acknowledgments, the events hosted by the organization examine the value of upholding non-conforming practices. "It's important to remember why a hotel exists. And then, more importantly, why a boutique hotel exists. It's out of necessity; it's out of need." Jayson Seidman, Founder and Managing Partner of Sandstone and BLLA Board Member, noted at BLLA's Boutique Hotel Owners Conference. "There's a massive world of hospitality assets that exist, and we all need to stick to our fundamentals of why we're all here." The conference, held in late October, showcased an impressive spirit of wisdom and



Alex Kirkwood of Kirkwood Collection, Ariela Kiradjian of BLLA, Rob Blood of Lark Hotels, Sims Foster of Foster Supply Hospitality



Jayson Seidman of Sandstone | Photo credit: Linda Kasian Photography

leadership. [BLLA Conference Discusses the Future of People in Boutique Hospitality.](#)

Adaptive and Resilient:

BLLA's 2021 article, [The Hospitality Industry's Impressive Ambition and Creative Ingenuity](#), closely examines how hoteliers shifted operations and functions to accommodate the fast-changing needs of pandemic hospitality.

When asked whether leisure or business properties were more at risk for a buy-out, Frances Kiradjian explained, "I think that's an old tale as to why someone would distinguish themselves so narrowly in the boutique space. If you're a convention hotel, that's a different story. Business travelers are requesting boutique hotels more than they ever have before. I recall meeting with a corporate travel agent from a large corporate travel agency and discussing their law clients who are keen on switching to boutiques for the past several years. A trend that is certainly gaining steam."

Brian De Lowe, Co-Founder & President of Proper Hospitality, shared the positive resilience of his hotel in Top Issues Owners Face Today (a panel at the conference), compared to big hotel chains. Speaking on the rise in guest numbers post-pandemic, De Lowe explained, "big corporate business travel at boring non-boutique hotels, that's not back. And I think those types of hotels are in trouble. But our business travelers are back. In our markets, our hotels are filled. [...] Small to midsize businesses are back; groups are back. People are traveling to places where they want to have leisure experiences while they're traveling for business."

For 13 years, BLLA has been celebrating the success of what they call "the boutique lifestyle" in hospitality while promoting the values of these properties to both investors and travelers, as well as designing professional development activities within the sector. Through education, vendor programs offering hotels special packages, magazines and newsletters, award ceremonies, roundtable discussions, networking events like conferences and town hall meetings, and a community of supporters, the organization, led by Frances and Ariela Kiradjian, offers appreciation for entrepreneurs with an independent approach to investing, owning, and operating a hotel, travel, dining, and cultural exchange. "BLLA is primarily dedicated to creating greater economic success for independent business owners by helping them level the playing field against larger brands and chains." Support the movement by joining BLLA or reach out: info@blla.org. (Article in collaboration with Margo Strifert.)

We are considering hosting a follow-up article showcasing the public sentiment on this subject. Please [click here](#) to provide your feedback.

Frances Kiradjian

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