

People Strategy

An Interview with Carmen Canton, Chief People Officer, Loews Hotels & Co

EDITORS' NOTE Carmen Canton leads the Human Resources function for New York-based hospitality company, Loews Hotels & Co. She brings more than 25 years of hands-on hospitality experience to Loews Hotels, working at a property, regional, and corporate level. Canton comes to Loews most recently from the Kessler Collection, where she led and pioneered the people strategy for the company. Previous to the Kessler Collection, Canton held the position of Area Senior Director of Human Resources for the Hilton Luxury Brands leading Human Resources Operations for 24 properties covering 10,000 employees across the Americas. Additionally, she spent time as the Human Resources Director for several Ritz-Carlton properties in Puerto Rico, Spain and Portugal. Canton is a member of SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management) and earned a Master's in Human Resources Management from EAE Business School in Barcelona.



Carmen Canton

was the commitment from the executive leadership team to ensure our team members are the most important part of our organization and, as such, our priority is to ensure we take care of them during their journey with us.

How do you describe Loews Hotels' culture and values?

Our company purpose is "to enrich life through exceptional experiences" and this applies not only to our guests, but also to our team members, partners, and the neighborhoods where our

hotels reside. Our principles are centered on Family, Care, Professionalism, Integrity, Value, and connection with our Neighbors. These principles are at the core of everything we do in every discipline.

The words Respect and Family are the most repeated words by our team members when asked to define our culture.

Will you discuss the role of the Chief People Officer?

I think the most important word in my role is People. My role is to lead the people strategy to engage the best team of professionals so they can deliver our promise to our guests. This involves

COMPANY BRIEF Headquartered in New York City, Loews Hotels & Co (loewshotels.com) is rooted in deep heritage and excellence in service. The hospitality company encompasses branded independent Loews Hotels, and a solid mix of partner-brand hotels. Loews Hotels & Co owns and/or operates 26 hotels and resorts across the U.S. and Canada. Located in major city centers and resort destinations from coast to coast, the Loews Hotels portfolio features properties grounded in family heritage and dedicated to delivering unscripted guest moments with a handcrafted approach.

What excited you about the opportunity to join Loews Hotels and made you feel it was the right fit?

Loews Hotels & Co has always had a strong reputation as an employer of choice, mostly because of the culture of genuine care for our team members. This aligns perfectly with my values, both personally and professionally. A people-centric company like Loews Hotels is very appealing for any HR professional, especially in a position like mine where you have the opportunity to impact the business results through decisions related to people.

One of the most important factors that made me realize that Loews was the right fit for me



Loews Arlington Hotel



Loews Coral Gables Hotel

ensuring we have strong and meaningful programs and initiatives in every area that affects our team members' experience and the company culture.

As a Chief People Officer, it is essential to continuously analyze and adapt our strategy based on the needs of our people and the company key objectives.

Some of the key areas for this role are talent management, to maximize everyone's potential, compensation and benefits, to ensure we answer to the unique needs of our teams, and engagement, through best-in-class recognition, well-being and communication programs.

How critical is it for the role to be engaged in business strategy?

Having a Chief People Officer is vital for supporting the company's business strategy. An organization's success depends on the culture and engagement of its team members.

If we think about hospitality, I would say it is even more important, because we are a business focused around people. I can't imagine how Loews would achieve our key business objectives without having the people strategy as a critical part of it.

What are your views on the future of work and how important is it for employees to be in an office to collaborate and maintain company culture?

The way we work has changed dramatically, especially after the pandemic. We need to be open and flexible to different models. These flexible options are what existing and potential team members are looking for, and likely each individual's needs are different.

Being physically present in an office doesn't always mean people are interacting or collaborating better than in a remote location. Each team within an organization

should identify their purpose and need and develop a balance that suits all involved. Utilizing technology, systems and processes will ensure connection and collaboration without being necessarily in the office five days a week.

Our industry does not have the capability to offer remote work or telework for many roles that require in-person human interactions, however we can always provide other types of flexibility because the traditional way of working will not probably come back. Giving choices to our people is a great competitive advantage.

Will you highlight Loews Hotels' commitment to building a diverse and inclusive workforce?

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) has always been in our company's DNA. We are proud to say that our commitment to building a diverse and inclusive workforce is not new, but we recognize that there is work to be done, especially at some levels in the organization, and this is reflected in our objectives for the next several years.

Our DEI purpose is a commitment to our multiple stakeholders and is held up by our 3 Pillars: Team Member Experience, Culture and Partnerships. We are committed to providing an inclusive and equitable experience for all team members, through each part of their career journey with Loews Hotels & Co. We promote a culture of authenticity, belonging, and accountability and we develop meaningful partnerships to support under-represented communities, educational institutions, and diverse suppliers.

Since last year we are investing in additional resources, and have prioritized our focus areas as part of our people strategy.

Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the hospitality industry?

Absolutely. The hospitality industry is an amazing industry for career growth. We continue to see the effort to ensure senior positions have female representation, but there is still some work to do in positions traditionally occupied by men, such as Executive Chefs.

I am proud to share that at Loews Hotels & Co, 42 percent of director roles and above are held by women.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

When thinking about advice for young people, I would likely use the same advice I give my daughter. I would tell them to be curious and be open to continuous learning and new challenges because they can find their true passion and true fit by trying and experiencing different opportunities.

Every individual is different, and I am not sure there is universal advice for young people, however I would also tell them to make sure they are selective in choosing the right company to work for, and to join an organization where they can be mentored, developed, have a sense of belonging and where they can grow to achieve their goals. ●