



42<sup>nd</sup> EHMA Annual General Meeting

## COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION

Geneva 17-19 April 2015



*The Swiss Organizing Committee*

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION IN HÔTELLERIE**

**European hoteliers affiliated to EHMA dedicated the week-end of April 17/19 to the understanding of digital, social and generational changes**

***Innovation and rapid changes in technology applied to digital communication were the theme of the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Meeting of the European Association of Hotel Managers last week end in Geneva: a subject of vital importance to understand customer trends and habits ([www.ehmageneva2015.com](http://www.ehmageneva2015.com))***

Institutional events were concentrated on Friday 17<sup>th</sup>: Management Council Meeting, press conference and General Assembly. The afternoon key note speaker was **Susanne Kraus-Winkler**, new President of **HOTREC**, the umbrella association of hotels, restaurants and cafés in Europe representing 42 national associations in 28 countries vis-à-vis the European institutions in Brussels. During the meeting 17 new members were presented, among whom 3 vouchers for PDP (Professional Development Program) intensive management courses at the famous American University of Cornell were drawn. The present number of members has now increased to 437. The EHMA new website and the program of the 2016 General Meeting to be held in the island of Cyprus were the final subjects discussed at the meeting.

Training is one of the main objectives of the Association: the Educational Day held on Saturday was particularly rich and interesting. After the welcome address by Geneva Mayor Sami Kanaan, the morning session started with the Swedish economist “guru” **Dr Kjell Nordström**, author of the book “Funky Business”. In his typical dynamic style, charismatic Nordström fascinated the audience with his out of the box vision of the future, in particular the globalization and the fast urbanization process that will transform the planet from 200 countries into 600 cities accounting for 80% of the world’s population and economic activity with important consequences for the hospitality industry.

**Jay Feitlinger** and **Jason McDonald**, respectively CEO and Director of International Client Services of the American strategic digital marketing agency **StringCan Interactive**, spoke about ways to optimize online bookings on hotel websites, a subject close to the heart of all hoteliers. The positioning of women on the hierarchical ladder and ways to improve it in order to reach power positions was the subject of the research

presented by **General Manager of Radisson Blu Style Hotel Vienna, Verena Forstinger**, and by **Markus Conzelmann of Radisson Blu Hotel in Lucerne**.

Benefits to the hotels from the usage of Augmented Reality were illustrated by **Olaf Slater, Chief Product Officer of Trust International**, a consulting company specialized in distribution and e-commerce for hotels. This web-based application allowing the visualization directly in streaming of a combination of real and virtual elements is aimed at potential customers enabling them to live the emotional experience of the hotel.

Key note speaker **Jean-Claude Biver, CEO and President of the Watches Division, LVMH Group**, successfully outlined in his passionate and vivid style success formulas for the luxury goods world and how to integrate tradition and innovation in order to win over new generation of millionaires. Also of new generations - students in this case – spoke also **Dr. Karthik Namasivayam**, Associate Dean of the **École Hôtelière of Lausanne**, an historical partner of Ehma. The school made available two Summer courses drawn among all members.

The day closed with a panel discussion on **Communication Revolution** moderated by dynamic **communicator Michael McKay**. Participants were: **Swisscom** Chief Technology Officer (Cto) **Thomas Di Giacomo**; **Cyril Ranque, Expedia** Senior Vice President Global Management; **Alexander Fritsch**, expert in online reputation of **Servus Tourismuspartner**; **Mario Jobbe**, COO & Co-founder of the digital and social media marketing company **Brand Karma**; **David Sadigh**, founder of **Digital Luxury Group**, and the **President Diversey Care, Vice President & Officer Sealed Air, Mrs/Dr. Ilham Kadri**. These subjects hold a great importance for hôtellerie and range from online reputation to clients' expectation on wi-fi, from problems inherent to OTA (Online Travel Agencies) to sustainability.

The opening night was held at the iconic **Jet d'Eau**, which reaches the impressive height of 140 meters on Lake Geneva. The visit to the old town Carouge and discovery of a chocolate factory as well as an introduction to watchmaking were the activities that entertained accompanying persons. All participants met for a spectacular Swiss Lunch at the Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues. During the Gala Dinner of Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> at the Grand Hotel Kempinski, President Hans Koch presented the **European Hotel Manager of the Year Award 2014** to **Panos Almyantis**, General Manager of Daios Cove Luxury Resort & Villas in Crete, and the **Ehma Sustainability Award by Diversey Care 2015**, dedicated to the best sustainable hospitality project of the year, to **Palmiro Noschese**, Area Manager Italy Meliá Hotels International. The Conference ended Sunday morning with the tour of the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and the brunch at the splendid **Beau Rivage Palace**.

A special thank goes to the Organizing Committee composed of General Manager **Thierry Lavalley** of **Grand Hotel Kempinski Geneva**, **Lars Wagner** of **Mandarin Oriental Geneva**; **Nicolas Meylan** of **Mövenpick Hotel & Casino Geneva**, **Klaus Kabelitz** of **Le Richmond Geneve**; **Stefan Winistörfer** of **Swissôtel Métropole Geneva**; **Jacques Mayer** of **Beau Rivage Geneve** and **Marc Olivier Raffray** of **Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues**. Not to be forgotten the much appreciated contribution of the **numerous traditional and local sponsors** without whom such an event could not be accomplished.

#### **EHMA in brief**

EHMA was founded in Rome in 1974 by a small group of top quality hotel properties' general managers of the Italian capital. The European Hotel Managers Association aims to improve qualification of professionals through training in view of increasing the standards of services to be provided to guests.

At present the Association gathers about **437 general managers** of the most prestigious hotels in 29 countries that make a total of **350 represented hotels**, 92,000 rooms, and 72,000 employees. Members meet once a year to discuss about shared themes such as: new technologies, trends, issues, relations, European hotel data and market research. EHMA admission requires a minimum of ten years' experience in the hotel sector, three of which as hotel general manager of outstanding international deluxe hotel properties.

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