

Publication: Palm Beach Post; Date: May 23, 2016; Section: Business; Page: D1



Michael King steered the rebranding of the Ritz-Carlton in Manalapan as the Eau Palm Beach Resort and Spa. The hotel and spa each received five-star ratings from Forbes Travel Guide this year. LANNIS WATERS / THE PALM BEACH POST

Eau resort boss says it's a great time for hotel biz

Independence of brand key to boutique resort's 'nimble' response to its customers.

By Jennifer Sorentrude
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Michael King is the managing director of Eau Palm Beach Resort and Spa in Manalapan.

Under his leadership, the luxury resort underwent a major transformation in 2013 – dropping the Ritz-Carlton name and rebranding itself as a beachfront getaway for both out-of-town guests and locals looking for a tropical retreat.

In February, the 309-room hotel and its spa received coveted five-star designations from Forbes Travel Guide. The resort was one of only 21 U.S. hotel properties to earn top marks for both its hotel and spa.

King credits his staff for the awards. The resort employs roughly 500 people during the height of the winter travel season.

“To have that award within the first two years of operation was amazing to me,” King said. “It really sets the bar for this hotel to continue to earn it.”

Name: Michael King
Age: 62
Hometown: Atlanta
Where you live now: Atlantis

About your company: Eau Palm Beach Resort and Spa is a remarkable example of the evolution in our business. We are an independent, boutique, award-winning resort and spa destination.

MONDAY MEETING

A Q&A WITH ...

MICHAEL KING

managing director
of Eau Palm Beach Resort
and Spa in Manalapan

As an independent brand we can be nimble, and flex with the needs of our guests. Since relaunching as Eau Palm Beach Resort and Spa in 2014, we have invested in reenvisioned rooms and fresh spaces like the new Breeze Ocean Kitchen. But our greatest investment remains in our hoteliers. Our extensive training and unique culture creates an environment where we continuously work to find new ways to surprise and delight our guests and hoteliers.

How your business has changed: In the hotel business, and especially at the luxury level, one size does not fit all. The very definition of “luxury” has changed. Our industry has to reimagine itself fairly regularly in order to compete at the highest levels. Some guests absolutely adore the idea of highly pampered and attentive service, while others prefer a great deal of anonymity and a very low-key environment. We know we are meeting our guests’ needs when we see Trip Advisor and other feedback generated with names and

kudos to specific hoteliers. That’s when we know our investment in training is paying off and we are delivering a five-star experience to our guests – whether they are on property for dinner, a meeting, a family vacation or a romantic getaway.

First paying job and what you learned from it: Newspaper delivery. I got up very early, became highly organized, developed my first customer relationship strategy and found a “faster/better” route so I could really maximize my time. My first experience with having a strong work ethic has really set the tone for the way I try to structure business decisions even today.

First break in the business: I was in college and working at the Omni in Atlanta in the evenings. This is where I met Herve Humler, president of Ritz-Carlton. He took a leadership role with Hyatt Hotels in Hawaii and offered me a job in Waikiki, and I haven’t looked back since.

Best business book you ever read: I read a book that revolutionized how I prioritize my work. It was written by the late Stephen Covey and Chris McChesney and titled *The Four Disciplines of Execution*. In a world of way too many things to do, it is a great tool in focusing your efforts on the vital few. In addition, I have great respect and admiration for Ken Blanchard’s work and have the distinct pleasure of his company in The World Leaders Group.

Monday continued on D2