

Insightable

CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADERS

In conversation with

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THE
PARK

On Enterprise AI
and Better decisions



QUESTION 01

You've grown from leading food and beverage operations to taking charge of an entire hotel's operations during a pre-opening phase. What changes most in your decision-making when you're building a hotel before the first guest even walks in?

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

66 Because of my experience working in the luxury hospitality industry over the past 13 years, I think the most significant change in the way decisions are made during the pre opening stage is that you are not just dealing with operations you are in fact creating a complete experience and establishing what the hotel will represent even before the first guest comes.

For me, the essential point has always been to make sure that we are not part of the "sea of sameness". At The Leela Palace Jaipur and at The Park Mumbai nowadays, creativity, innovation and a commitment to challenging traditional hospitality have formed the basis of the way I deal with the guest experience.

The Park Hotels have a clear belief in being "anything but ordinary" by pushing boundaries, in rethinking established norms and in producing experiences that are unique and memorable.

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QUESTION 01

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

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Hence, when considering any decision during the pre opening stage, one must put oneself in the guest's position and ask themselves what will make their experience more comfortable, what will surprise them, and how the experience can be personalised in order to establish an emotional connection rather than just providing a service.

Design also plays a crucial role in the decision making process since it determines the atmosphere and character of the whole property; it must be distinctive, purposeful and match the experience we want the guests to have.

Since I have experience in the field of Food & Beverage, it is particularly important to concentrate on this area. While execution is essential, I think that F&B should do more than just provide good food; it should be theatrical, engaging, experiential and align with changing guest expectations. Now, too, health and wellness are becoming more important, and including these aspects in the F&B offering can result in a guest experience that is more relevant and up to date.

In the end, when carrying out a pre opening inspection, my focus is not so much on asking ourselves 'How should we run this hotel?' as it is on asking 'How can we create an experience that guests will remember?' This way of thinking affects all areas ranging from design and service culture through to food and beverage, personalisation and the smallest operational aspects.

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QUESTION 02

Luxury hospitality runs on hundreds of small operational decisions every day. In your experience, what separates hotels that consistently deliver memorable guest experiences from those that simply deliver good service?

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

66 I am certain that what sets good service apart from a truly unforgettable guest experience is careful attention to detail. In the field of luxury hospitality we frequently say, "God is in the details", and I agree with this statement wholeheartedly. It is precisely the small details such as anticipating a guest's needs, understanding their preferences, and providing service with real warmth that result in experiences which people remember.

At present, since a younger generation is increasingly assuming leadership and front-line positions in the hospitality industry, the basics of planning and carrying out tasks have become even more crucial. Having good intentions on their own is not enough to produce excellent experiences; it is planning, communication and careful execution that bring an experience to life. As we state, planning without execution has little value.

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QUESTION 02

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

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At the same time, I think that hospitality leaders should always act in the role of an experimenter. We must not carry on with certain practices just because they have always been the way they are. Since guests are always changing, we have to constantly challenge ourselves, innovate and discover new methods for surprising and delighting them.

What makes hospitality memorable is a combination of paying attention to detail, establishing a real human connection, making careful plans, carrying out the details perfectly, and being willing to try new things; it is because of these factors that good service becomes an experience which remains with the guest long after they have left.

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QUESTION 03

AI is beginning to influence forecasting, staffing, inventory, guest preferences, and operational planning. Where do you think it creates the biggest practical advantage for hospitality leaders without taking away the human touch?

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

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I think that AI is going to become more and more important in the hospitality industry, and that is quite the correct approach. The kind of analysis, business intelligence and insights that AI can offer can make a significant difference to how managers forecast demand, plan their staffing, understand guest preferences, handle inventory, and make operational decisions.

In my opinion, the greatest practical benefit is that AI enables hospitality executives to make quicker, more informed, and more data-driven decisions; it is able to detect patterns and opportunities which might not always be obvious using traditional approaches and thus allows teams to direct their time and energy towards the areas where the most impact is achieved.

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QUESTION 03

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

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Yet there is one thing that AI cannot genuinely duplicate namely, the true human touch. Since hospitality is essentially a matter of people, hotels may make use of technology to know a guest's preferences, but it is only a human who can understand the emotions behind those preferences, foresee a need at the moment, and establish a real connection.

AI is capable of analysing data, offering insights and even assisting with creativity by referring to information and previous patterns. However, it is only through human interaction and expertise that true service, warmth, empathy, passion, and the ability to establish an emotional connection can be achieved.

I don't see AI as a replacement for hospitality professionals but rather as a strong helper; it should remove the repetitive and analytical work so that our teams can spend more time on what hospitality does best creating meaningful experiences by means of true human connection.

What I see as the future of luxury hospitality is not a choice between AI and the human touch but AI enhancing the human touch.

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QUESTION 04

You've worked across Hyatt, Raffles, The Leela, DLF Camellias, and now The Park. Across such different luxury environments, which operational signals do you instinctively watch first when something feels off?

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

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Having worked in varied luxury groups like Hyatt, Raffles, The Leela, DLF Camellias, and the current company Park, I believe that attention to detail, planning, and execution is the core of all operations.

Whenever there is an aberration, my first reaction is not to tackle the symptomatic issue but to figure out the root cause and take corrective action.

I believe in adopting a scientific attitude towards problems, going deep to discover what exactly has gone wrong and then initiating remedial action to prevent it in the future.

I also think that while handling a problematic situation, one should adopt an alternative solution attitude. One should be able to think of what could have been done differently in order to avoid the situation. Unless we adopt an alternative solution attitude, we cannot hope to solve the problem.

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QUESTION 04

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

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I think that in luxury hospitality, the product and its consistency are of utmost importance. Cost cutting has to be done with utmost care without compromising on the core product; otherwise, it will end up becoming something that is completely different. The moment we compromise on the product, it will not be considered luxury anymore. Thus, for me, the balance between cost and luxury is of prime importance

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QUESTION 05

Imagine one intelligent view connected guest feedback, staffing, inventory, events, occupancy, and operational performance in real time. Which leadership decisions would become dramatically better, and which ones should always remain human led?

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

66 I believe the real opportunity is not to make hotels more technology driven, but to make them more intelligently human. If I had one intelligent view connecting guest feedback, staffing, inventory, events, occupancy and operational performance in real time, it would dramatically improve the quality and speed of many leadership decisions. It would allow us to identify patterns rather than simply react to incidents.

For example, we could anticipate pressure points in the operation before they become visible to the guest whether that is a sudden increase in demand, a staffing imbalance, a potential inventory constraint, or a recurring service issue. It would enable us to deploy people more intelligently, optimise resources, anticipate operational bottlenecks, and make faster commercial decisions, while also identifying trends in guest preferences and behaviour.

But I would be very conscious about one thing: data can tell us what is happening; it cannot always tell us what hospitality should feel like.

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QUESTION 05

SOHIL'S PERSPECTIVE

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In luxury hospitality, I strongly believe that service should be intuitive, not intrusive; anticipatory, but never presumptuous. A guest may not always be able to articulate what they want. Our responsibility is sometimes to understand the unspoken need and create a moment that the guest did not even expect. That requires observation, empathy, judgement and, ultimately, human connection.

For me, there is a fundamental distinction between personalisation and intrusion. We should use intelligence to help our teams know more, but not to make the guest feel that they are being constantly monitored. The objective should be to create a seamless experience where the technology is almost invisible and the hospitality is unmistakably human.

There are also certain decisions that I believe should always remain human led: how we respond to an emotionally charged guest situation, when to make an exception to a policy, how we recover a service failure, how we recognise a moment that deserves genuine warmth, and how we create an emotional connection. These are not simply operational decisions; they require empathy, intuition and judgement.

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Let AI read the signals.

Let people create the experience.

Use intelligence to move faster, while keeping empathy, intuition, and human connection at the centre.

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Sohil Bhargava



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Where could AI make hotel operations smarter without making the guest experience feel less human?

Share your perspective in the comments .