



MGM Mirage's Michele Diener is Focused on 'High Performance Hospitality'

By Glenn Hasek
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Name: Michele Diener

Title: Director of Corporate Sustainability Strategies

Company: MGM Mirage

My primary responsibilities: "I help design the companywide sustainable operations strategy and help to develop and implement new programs and sustainability initiatives."

Company's most significant environmental accomplishment so far: "CityCenter. It is a transformational project and its sustainability message has already reached millions of people."

Our biggest environmental challenge: "Making sure that all of our hotels' individual efforts align with our internal corporate strategy."

What I like most about what I do: "Breaking new ground and working with extremely talented and dedicated people."

What advice I would give to someone considering starting a sustainability initiative: "Pursuing sustainability is a marathon, not a sprint. You need to start small, gain momentum, and not tire out. Sustainability is not a trend; it is not going to go away."

LAS VEGAS—December is going to be a busy month for Michele Diener, director of corporate sustainability strategies for MGM Mirage. It is then when most of the company's 18-million-square-foot CityCenter complex will open, attracting tens of thousands more visitors to the Las Vegas Strip. CityCenter, which includes hotels including the Vdara Hotel, Mandarin Oriental, ARIA Resort & Casino, and The Harmon, has already earned four LEED Gold certifications from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Diener is in a unique position with MGM Mirage. Many lodging companies still do not employ sustainability officers but MGM Mirage has 11 people charged with carrying out the company's green strategies. Many more employees participate in green teams at the property level. MGM Mirage currently owns and operates 16 casinos in Nevada, Mississippi and Michigan and has a 50 percent investment in four other properties.

In her role with MGM Mirage, Diener is responsible for the development and implementation of environmentally sustainable initiatives and operations programs across the entire portfolio of resort hotels comprised of nearly 50,000 rooms and 40,000 employees. For CityCenter, she is responsible for the sustainable operations strategy for the mixed-use project that includes 5,000 hotel rooms, private residences, a casino, and a 500,000-square-foot retail and entertainment district.

Co-author of 'High Performance Hospitality'

Diener has worked for MGM Mirage for almost two years. She joined the company two years after it had established its Energy and Environmental Service Division. She has already established herself as one of the lodging industry's leading proponents of sustainable operations. She is co-author of "High Performance Hospitality, Sustainable Hotel Case Studies," which was published late last year by three organizations: the Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise, University of Michigan; Sustainable Conservation; and the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation.

Diener attributes much of her lodging industry success to what she learned while attending the Erb Institute. It was there where she earned a Master of Business Administration degree and a Master of Science in Natural Resources degree. Previous to her graduate work she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Design and Environmental Analysis from Cornell University.

The well-educated professional has always had an interest in the environment, she says, even as a child. Today she is part of an effort to educate all MGM Mirage employees about the value of sustainable operations.

"What works for one property may not necessarily work for another," Diener says. "When one property comes up with a good idea, we try to share that best practice."

Uniform Plastic Eliminated

One recent initiative she cited was the Bellagio's decision to eliminate the plastic covers that are automatically placed over employee uniforms after they are cleaned. This step has eliminated the use of thousands of pieces of plastic. MGM Mirage has a long list of other environmental accomplishments. A few examples include:

- Variable frequency drives (VFDs) allow for the regulation of electricity flow to the huge chiller pumps that cool resorts. Computers tell the system how much cooling is really needed in the building at a particular moment; the pumps, rather than working at 100 percent

capacity, respond accordingly. Mandalay Bay installed VFDs for the pumps at Shark Reef, which saves 1.1 million kWh of natural gas annually. The Mirage installed VFDs on the Mirage Events Center chillers, which saves more than 317,000 kWh annually.

- More than 80 percent of the waste from the Mandalay Bay Convention Center is diverted from the landfill. Property-wide, Mandalay Bay diverted more than 3,000 tons in 2008. The Mirage implemented additional recycling best practices, resulting in more than 4,000 tons recycled, which equates to a 34 percent recycling rate.
- The company launched an employee awareness campaign at every property called "Conservation Begins At Home." Through this program, more than 50,000 MGM Mirage employees learn how to incorporate sustainable practices into their everyday lives.

As she works to push forward smart business practices throughout the company, her focus in the near term will continue to be on CityCenter.

"The project is changing the way we do business," Diener says. "Thousands of designers and architects and builders now know what LEED is because of it. Thousands of employees now know what sustainable operations means. Millions of visitors who come to Las Vegas will be able to experience what a sustainable community offers."

[Click here](#) to learn more about MGM Mirage's environmental commitment and [click here](#) to learn more about CityCenter.

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[J.W. \(Bill\) Marriott, Jr. to Receive Lifetime Achievement Award](#)

BERLIN, GERMANY—J.W. (Bill) Marriott, Jr., chairman and CEO of Marriott International, has been named the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 13th annual International Hotel Investment Forum (IHIF), scheduled for March 8 to 10, 2010, at the InterContinental Berlin, Germany. The IHIF Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to an individual who has made a difference in the hospitality industry by their actions, deeds, and accomplishments. Marriott has made an indelible mark with his commitment to environmental preservation.

11/12/2009

[The Betsy Hotel Appoints Vice President for Philanthropy](#)

The Betsy Hotel has named Dr. Deborah Briggs as vice president for philanthropy to provide strategic and operational leadership for the hotel's community-conscious efforts, that will, in the words of Jonathan Plutzik, chairman and principal partner, "build our business and make the world a better place." As a proven leader and social entrepreneur with almost 30 years of experience bridging profit and nonprofit business, Briggs takes on the role of charitable giver and community activist in the name of The Betsy and its growing family of global guests.

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