

DESIGN HOTELS™ PRESS RELEASE



Design Hotels' way into the future

New Executive Board and Evolution of Business Model

Berlin, December 4, 2018 – Since 1993, Design Hotels™ has been able to build and expand its distinctive brand by selectively growing its member hotel portfolio and offering today's travelers individualized specialist knowledge, innovative services and a future-forward vision. After a successful year 2018, the newly formed Executive Board now leads the company's operation with the aim to further grow the business and expand the Design Hotels™ brand. Founder Claus Sendlinger will continue as advisor to the Executive Board. In collaboration with its major shareholder Marriott International, Design Hotels™ plans to offer its member hotels an additional new form of innovative Design Hotels™ membership. It was first announced to hotel owners and representatives in October at this year's members' conference "Arena★ 2018" in Copenhagen – which had the most successful attendance in the event's history.

On December 1, 2018, **Peter Cole** assumed his new role as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Design Hotels™, and sole member of the Management Board. During his 22 years with Marriott, Peter most recently lead the company's integration of Starwood Hotels & Resorts as Managing Director of Business Integration, overseeing a wide array of activities including hotel operations, organizational design, talent management, loyalty programs, system integration, financial management, and unit growth. In previous roles Peter was also Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Americas for Marriott, as well as global CFO of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company LLC; both

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positions that attest to his erudition when it comes to steering the financial rudder of a large multinational corporation. The ardent runner and swimmer holds a BBA in Real Estate Finance from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and an MBA from the University of Maryland. “I couldn’t be more excited to take on the leadership role at Design Hotels AG – an organization that is the clear leader in providing unique original hospitality experiences. Over the past 25 years, Claus and his team have curated an impressive portfolio of unique design driven hotels and the *Originals* behind them. I can’t wait to continue this legacy of curation and growth.”, says Peter.

As Chief Operating Officer (COO), **Serdar Kutucu** is now working closely with Peter to further drive innovation and building an engaged community of well-experienced travelers. Over the past 10 years, Serdar has played a pivotal role in shaping the company’s fine collection of more than 300 privately owned member hotels. In 2014, he took leadership of the distinctive Design Hotels™ Brand as Vice President Brand, Marketing & Communication, and in 2017, as Executive Vice President Brand & Strategy, aligning the company’s brand ideation with its expanding vision to create original, meaningful hospitality experiences. Serdar, who holds a Master’s Degree in International Business Administration from the University of Vienna, brings the fundamentals and the creativity to further drive innovation and consolidate internal processes while conveying the company culture and positioning Design Hotels™ as one of the most sophisticated brands in the industry. He adds “We will continue putting the industry’s most original and holistic hospitality concepts on the world map and offer travelers specialist knowledge, innovative services and a future-forward vision, providing long-term value to our partners and to the community.”

Third member of the Executive Board is Chief Financial Officer (CFO) **Sascha Wolff**. Sascha joined the predecessor company of Design Hotels™, lebendsart global networks AG in February 2000 – right after the company’s IPO in December 1999 - as Head of Accounting and later also took over Financial Controlling. With his profound knowledge and understanding of the company’s finances and internal processes, Sascha was promoted to Director of Finance in 2004 and joined the Executive Board. In 2009, he was promoted to Vice President Finance and managed to lead the company through uncertain times after the 2008/2009 worldwide financial crisis. Since then, Design Hotels™ operates on a solid financial footing, which is manifested in its year-over-year growth. Consequently, he became Vice President & Chief Financial Officer in 2014. Over the years, Sascha made significant contributions to the evolution of the company and was ultimately given responsibility for the entire Finance & Administration unit in 2014 as Chief Financial Officer. He leads the company’s administrative, financial and legal affairs and handles all Investor Relation matters.

After leading Design Hotels™ for 25 years, **Claus Sendlinger** will continue his involvement with the company as advisor and mentor to the Executive Board. He says “This organizational change will help us to get closer to our vision of becoming the definitive source for original hospitality

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experiences. The collaboration with Marriott will allow Design Hotels to tackle new business opportunities and to further develop its product and service portfolio for the member hotels.” With this year marking a quarter century of the company, Design Hotels™ has seen the best performance in its history in terms overall revenue, qualitative portfolio growth and brand recognition. The results reconfirm that there is a strong need in the hospitality marketplace for innovation and alternative services offerings that allow hotels more flexibility to grow their business performance while keeping their independency. To be launched in the beginning of 2019, Design Hotels™ will offer an additional business model for a new form of the Design Hotels™ membership. In particular, this new business opportunity will allow the participating member hotels to get access to Marriott’s distribution channels, the new Marriott loyalty program, which unites SPG, Marriott Rewards and The Ritz-Carlton Rewards, and a standardized set of products and services. Design Hotels™ will continue to offer the classic Design Hotels™ membership. This innovative range of products will give the member hotels the unique opportunity to choose the best option for their business according to their very individual needs. “This new form of membership is another example of the innovation and industry leading portfolio of services which Design Hotels is famous for delivering. Our member hotels now have even more powerful tools available to them, including affiliating with lodging industry’s largest and most powerful loyalty program. The Design Hotels team continues to focus on enabling its brand to thrive while delivering value to its member hotels.”, adds Peter.



Notes to Editors

For high resolution images and more information on our member hotels, please register on the Design Hotels™ Virtual Press Office designhotels.com/press.

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To download the images directly, click [here](#).

For additional information, please contact us via email press@designhotels.com or phone at +49 30-8849 400 70.

For reservations, please refer our website [designhotels.com](https://www.designhotels.com) or find the appropriate Design Hotels™ toll-free number [designhotels.com/toll-free-numbers](https://www.designhotels.com/toll-free-numbers).

About Design Hotels™

Design Hotels™ represents and markets a curated selection of over 300 independent hotels in more than 60 countries across the globe. More than a collection of hotels, the company is a collection of stories. Each property reflects the ideas of a visionary hotelier, an "Original", someone with a passion for genuine hospitality, cultural authenticity, thought-provoking design and architecture. Each "Original" stands for the individual, aesthetic and service-driven experience that his or her hotel provides.

Founded by Claus Sendlinger in 1993, Design Hotels™ offers its members insightful travel industry knowledge, from market trend consultancy to international sales representation. The company has its headquarters in Berlin and branches in London, Los Angeles, New York and Singapore. Executive Board members are: Peter Cole (CEO), Serdar Kutucu (COO) and Sascha Wolff (CFO)

In 2015, Design Hotels™ joined forces with Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG®), enabling its member hotels to have both a greater and more selective reach while offering its Community the benefit of a prominent loyalty program. In August 2018, Marriott International combined its leading loyalty programs of SPG®, Marriott Rewards® and The Ritz-Carlton Rewards® into one loyalty program with instant elite status matching and points transfer.

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