

LEISURE & HOSPITALITY INTERNATIONAL

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Three in One

sbe continues to build its portfolio of hotels, restaurants and nightlife properties as it expands in major U.S. cities. **Page 16**



SLS HOTEL



ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER
The center prepares for its 30th anniversary while looking to the future. **P 75**



MARRIOTT GLOBAL SALES AND CUSTOMER CARE
Marriott's hospitality extends beyond its hotels to the workplace. **P 111**

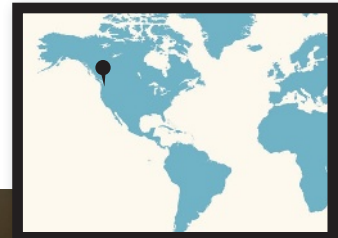
PLUS



DAWSON DESIGN ASSOCIATES INC.

www.dawsondesignassociates.com Revenue: \$2.8 million HQ: Seattle

Employees: 26 Andrea Dawson Sheehan, CEO and director: "Everybody has to really deliver and be committed to learning and growing within our firm."



Dawson Design Associates' clients want cutting-edge interiors that get the attention of design magazines.

Millennial Design

As baby boomers retire, the clientele of luxury lifestyle hotels is becoming younger with a new set of preferences and requirements. **BY RUSS GAGER**

People who spend \$400 to \$500

nightly on a hotel room have high expectations, as do the owners of those hotels. Meeting those requirements with innovative solutions requires brainstorming, collaboration between architects and interior architecture and design firms and lots of creative thinking. Customers of boutique firm Dawson Design Associates Inc. expect cutting-edge interiors that will garner them attention from industry and

design magazines. "We get press in business journals, newspapers and travel and leisure publications, as well as design magazines," CEO and Director Andrea Dawson Sheehan declares.

Driving that innovation is a huge transition that is occurring in the hospitality industry. "This is a really exciting time in the industry," she observes. "The baby boomers are retiring, and the new generation of hotel guests which everybody is

focusing on is the millennial generation, who are now between 20 and 30 years old. They will be our guests for the next 10 to 20 years as they climb into open management positions.

"Also, generation X are the new leaders, and their lifestyle, tastes and value structure is very different than baby boomers. They are raised in a virtual world with computers and games. They put much more value on carbon footprint and



Dawson coordinates closely with other architects and engineers to ensure it delivers the quality expected on its projects.

green. They really like to socialize and hang out together, and Facebook with each other and social network. They need facilities that support their lifestyle.”

Established high-end hotels are working hard to draw in younger, social-networking guests, because if they don’t, they risk becoming irrelevant to younger generations. “There’s nothing cool about staying at something that looks like an expensive retirement home,” Sheehan emphasizes.

PLACES TO PLAY

Boutique and lifestyle hotels and new chains are springing up to cater to the high-end tastes of these younger generations. One of Dawson Design Associates’ projects, the Hotel Zetta in San Francisco, has a game room on a mezzanine in the two-story lobby above the ground floor with video games, a video telephone booth, a pool table and even retro shuffleboard, despite its retirement home caché.

For guests’ young children, the game room has boxes, chutes and ladders, along with a two-story Plinko game that involves dropping balls from the upper game room through an obstacle course of large pins to bins in the lower lobby. Adults landing their ball in the number 10 bin in the middle receive a free drink.

“I was just there yesterday and I was talking to the restaurateur who runs the bar, and there’s this cheering going on be-

“We’re restless, so we never sit back and just take the easy path.”
 ANDREA DAWSON SHEEHAN



Dawson Design Associates says it maintains a passion for hospitality and always raising the bar on its projects.

cause some people from the upper lobby were dropping balls,” Sheehan relates. “So it works its way down the wall, and everybody is watching this interaction going to the right bin.” It’s this type of engagement that Dawson Design Associates tries to create with its projects.

TOUCHING HOTELS

Founded in 1987 in Dallas, Dawson Design Associates was established to provide inte-

rior design for restaurants. Over the years, the company has branched out into hotels, conference facilities and everything in them, including bars, lobbies, guest rooms, spas and pools. “Anything that touches the hotel, we do,” Sheehan says.

This requires a high degree of coordination with other architects and engineers working on the project. “The best collaboration is when we’re working with a really creative architect who is great on the

exterior and we have a lot of synergy between the two,” Sheehan says. “We like to have a say in the overall flavor. We will work with a concept architect who is doing the shell and core, and we’ll do the interior architecture – including space planning – pretty much after they’ve done their civil and planning and permitting. We start creating the whole interior experience – the lighting, plants, the walls, the finish details, the fabrics and even the toilet paper accessories – we do everything in the interior.”

COMMITTED DELIVERY

Dawson Design Associates works the world over and established a London office last year to facilitate international work. The hotel owners it works for frequently are financial investment firms rather than hoteliers.

“A lot of our clients are real estate trusts or private equity groups, so they use hotels as an investment vehicle,” Sheehan says. Dawson Design Associates often examines potential hospitality properties for clients and advises them on how a property could be repositioned in the market.

Employees of Dawson Design Associates must be generalists, and frequently are recruited from architecture and trade schools without extensive experience in other design firms.

“Everybody has to really deliver and be committed to learning and growing within our firm,” Sheehan emphasizes. “We have a passion for hospitality, and we’re always trying to raise the bar. We have to stay current and track the trends in fashion. We’re restless, so we never sit back and just take the easy path.

“Clearly, what we have is fairly unusual, and it’s hard to find people with that type of passion and drive these days.”