

May 2011, when Wolfgang M. Neumann joined Rezidor as the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Kurt Ritter welcomed him as “an internationally experienced hospitality expert with the professional knowledge and spirit to keep our

_____ There’s a new man in town! _____

MEET REZIDOR’S NEW COO

business growing and on top”. 100 days into his new job, Wolfgang enjoys a spirited talk with Renu Snehi, Hotline’s Editor-in-Chief, revealing his First Impressions, Priorities and Philosophy – and the Inside Track to the Person in the COO Hot Seat.



A FAMILY MAN

Welcome Wolfgang! What are your first impressions of Rezidor in the first 100 days in the job?

I was first introduced to the Rezidor board at a dinner in Stockholm before I officially joined the company in May. When I heard legendary leaders like Marilyn Carlson Nelson and Kurt Ritter, share their stories and passion at this dinner, I sensed strong family values that I haven't really seen anywhere else in the industry. Then already, I knew I had joined the right company and these impressions have been fully confirmed since then.

Where have your travels taken you already?

I've now visited almost 50 Rezidor properties and there's only one way to describe my feelings: A company with Great Vision and Great People, Great Hotels and enormous potential for the future.

Yes I Can! spirit is not merely a slogan at Rezidor – it lives! I saw it in everyone's heart and work. Rezidorians are true hoteliers, and a very special breed as compared to other teams I have worked with, who were probably a bit more process- and business-driven. Rezidor people are hospitality driven – and that's what I discovered – genuine hosts!

So I salute Kurt Ritter for creating such a unique and special culture where everyone is a

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performer with a specific role to play, and they play it with immense pride and joy.

Rezidor's commitment to grow leaders from within is extremely strong. This was very obvious at the Business School's 15th Birthday Celebrations in Copenhagen, where I met our current and future leaders. And what struck me that so many of them seem to have clear thoughts on what they wanted to reach in life, and a strong will how to get there. Rezidor certainly has a true commitment to talent development, and I feel privileged to be part of this team.

Another remarkable quality of Rezidor is its impeccable loyalty record. Kurt Ritter and Knut Kleiven together represent over 65 years of leadership – unique in our industry! And we have so many other staunch Rezidorians who have given 20-40 years of their lives. That's simply amazing; something really worth celebrating.

The Rezidor Executive Committee warmly welcomed me and my 2 other new colleagues

– Eric De Neef and Michael Farrell. I greatly appreciate and value Kurt Ritter's trust, support and leadership – he made us fit right in. He's encouraged us to openly share our opinions, he empowered us to bring in our outside experience and to challenge things. Rezidor's EC is now a very strong and well balanced team with legendary leadership, great ideas, true teamwork and the drive to make things happen. And most importantly, pursue our jointly agreed primary objective... to increase Rezidor's Profits!

Speaking of Objectives! What are your top priorities as Rezidor's COO?

Shifting the pendulum from cost-control culture to profit-driven culture!

We aim to become one of the most profitable companies, and to create great shareholder value. Everyone, regardless of their position or rank – be it Cook or General Manager, be it an Engineer or a COO – can and should strive to drive sales and contribute to boosting profits, either directly or indirectly. Selling is not a job description – it's an essential focus and a

characteristic of entrepreneurship. And that's how I encourage Rezidorians to think – as entrepreneurs!

Rezidor is a highly successful organisation when it comes to effective cost management. Moving forward, we want to shift that emphasis to driving revenue, and do this with a real passion. Ultimately, we are in the business of making profits... No profits, No business, No Rezidor – No You, and No Me! It's a cultural shift that will take both time and a lot of hard work – but I am very confident that we'll get there.

Optimise our organisation!

We have a team of 35,000+ people – all with different talents, backgrounds, knowledge and experiences – and ultimately with different responsibilities in the organisation in so many different geographic locations. We need to ensure that we have the best possible organisational structure for all of us to perform at optimum level for the benefit of our guests and shareholders.

As Rezidor has grown at such high speed over the past years, it is now a great opportunity to take stock of our organisational framework and ask ourselves how we can optimise the way we work together. This is not a quick fix, no revolution but an evolution based on the solid foundation which exists and our primary focus is to build an organisation that fosters talent, innovation and diversity, helping us to maximise the full potential of our people, and align all efforts to one common mission.

100% Guest Satisfaction

The Customer is King, and the King is Back, as Knut rightly says. 100% Guest satisfaction is the most important priority for all of us. We simply cannot fail at this. In the overall process, the Brussels Head Office is there to support and I like to look at it as the Support Office. I see our hotels – and our hotel teams – as the real ambassadors of our brands. They make or break our image with a customer. So the essence of our business is the guest and my thinking starts always bottom up, with the guest experience in our hotels as the fundamental focus!

It's at the hotels that we build key relationships; it's at the hotels that we showcase our brands; it's at the hotels that we create experiences. This is where our foundations are and that's where our

focus must be. We need to create experiences that are unforgettable and distinctive, to separate us from the rest of the pack.

Global Brand Alignment and Carlson Synergies!

Building global synergies with Carlson is a key element of our overall ambition to increase profitability. The newly created "Carlson Rezidor Global Hotel Steering Committee" is working across all theatres to drive brand alignment, increase brand awareness and increase our market share, and drive revenues. We are leaving no stone unturned in terms of growing profits via global synergies. It's a 1+1=3 opportunity, and in unity with our Carlson colleagues we are taking this opportunity by the horns!

We have a great portfolio of powerful hotel brands! The growth of both Radisson Blu and for Park Inn by Radisson has been spectacular: an incredibly fast paced journey! In this process of achieving critical mass, we had to be flexible with these brands and we now need to redefine the values and standards of these brands. Most importantly they need to sit clearly and distinctively next to each other, each of them in a clear "swim lane" so to speak. As our expansion continues, we must ensure there is no overlapping or confusion going forward for our employees in delivering a clear brand promise; a promise, which is understood and appreciated by our customers.

Earlier, I spoke about pride. Each one of our employees must feel proud of the very brand that they are associated with. I think there is an opportunity to proudly position Park Inn by Radisson as a great mid market brand and to be clear that it is not "the step sister of Radisson Blu". We must understand, value and respect the differences, of our Brands and make each of them the leader in their respective segments. Hotel Missoni is not Radisson Blu and Radisson Blu is not Park Inn – we must clearly communicate the service experience that we offer with the different brands and deliver them with pride and consistency.

Responsibility Vs. Response-Ability

Our next biggest priority is to keep our troops aligned to our vision and mission, while constantly adjusting to the ever changing business dynamics.



AN ACTION MAN



It's no secret that we are yet again faced with quite a dangerous mix of new realities, including the ongoing global social-economical-political unrest, tumbling stock markets, and instability across all continents. We are in an extended period of instability and uncertainty, which makes it very hard to predict what lies ahead.

But we must not panic or lose sight of our responsibility to respond to the changing macro-economic climate smartly. We are RESPONSE-ABLE! We don't have the power to change the world, but as an organisation and as individuals, we can decide how to respond and we have the power to change the way we see things and react to these challenges in certain ways.

Be Vigilant, Be Smart, Be Prepared and above all, Be Courageous!

Where do you see Rezidor in 5 years from now?

Rezidor has a huge potential to sit confidently - yet very distinctively - on the podium amongst the top 3 players of Europe. Our unique culture, our distinctive brands and our unique Z-spirit are the key elements that will set us apart!

You like to look at yourself a "whole-brain leader"? Tell us more about that and about yourself.

We all know about the differences of our left and right brains, and the consequences when we let either side dominate our behaviours. The left side is about details, structure and logic, while the right side is about emotions, creativity and the big picture. In my view it is not about left versus right, but applying the two sides in concert! To be effective you need to use both sides - that's what I refer to as "whole brain leadership"!

I am also a firm believer of teamwork! There is no "I" in TEAM. But there certainly is an "I" in independence and integrity. And I admire working with teams build up of strong individuals, who know clearly when and how to compete and when to complete.

I have lots of passion, but at the same time I am also a man of details! And hospitality is all about thousands of details from the customer's point of view. Our job, as hoteliers, is to get them right - all the time. This multitude of detail is no different in a mid-market hotel, an upmarket hotel and a luxury hotel - the basics remain the

same, we just need to deliver them in a different way.

My Life Philosophy: I look at myself as a climber, not a camper! Life is about climbing and enjoying the thrills and rewards which go with those experiences and challenges. Life's short and I believe in living it passionately! I am someone who loves a good challenge! Both on and off the job. Every year, I set myself up for a new one. Last year, I climbed the Mont Blanc. The year before, I ran the New York Marathon, and this year I competed in the Paris Marathon.

But above all, I am a family man! My wife, Gwen is Dutch and works for a Contemporary Art Fund (called Outset), which started in the UK, and is now developing internationally. Our first daughter Robin was born in Paris. She's now 13 and a keen swimmer - she won the German and Dutch National Championships. Emily, our 11-year-old artistic daughter was born in Frankfurt. She loves to sing and dance, while our 8-year-old son, J-P (short for Jan-Phil) is our sporty Swede who was born in Stockholm. He's just got his golf handicap and now challenges his dad on the course. I was born an Austrian - so we have 5 nationalities and constant mix 3 different languages at home!

I love travelling with my family and cooking is one of our weekend adventures together. Our three children have different tastes, personalities and priorities, but all share two things in common - self-confidence and openness towards the world and other people. My wife and I have worked very hard to instil these two characteristics in each of them. We have moved 11 times and lived in 7 different countries and with that comes a certain attitude towards life. I constantly challenge myself of being a good role model for our children and to provide them with a certain outlook towards life and people... it's an ongoing process and a never ending learning journey.

I strongly believe that there is "no such thing as a free lunch" in life. We need to believe in ourselves, be aware of what is going on around us, grab the opportunities which are offered to us and have the courage to go after them.

Success comes in Cans, not Cant's - and I am most certainly a Yes I Can! man.

A YES I CAN! MAN