

KEVIN BEAUVAIS, INVISION HOSPITALITY

Posted on Tue, 07/08/2008 - 16:15 in Entrepreneurs

Does a clear corporate vision necessarily negate a clear conscience? Although InVision Hospitality founder and CEO Kevin Beauvais may be the first to admit that business acumen and philanthropy can make uneasy bedfellows, his progressive attitude aims to bring some much needed clarity to that favourite business phrase 'breaking the mould'.

InVision launched in May 2007 with a mission statement that promises to "Elevate each hotel, resort, restaurant and residential project to its full potential". This might not immediately set it apart from the crowd of competition, but the CEO's uniquely informed approach reveals a distinctly different perspective.

Corporate Experience

With over 27 years experience at the top-end of the hospitality sector, Beauvais has certainly had plenty of time to contemplate the meaning of 'successful evolution' - not only in terms of corporate management, but more individual ideas of 'achievement' too. "Previously I've worked with large companies and corporations who were more than admirable, but starting my own business meant that I could do things without my hands tied behind my back by financial or stockmarket pressures," explains Beauvais. "It meant I could focus on values and standards; things more important than making money. Not that we aren't in this to make money - we are and will - but we also believe that in the long run this route is more profitable, in every sense."

The route Beauvais refers to is perhaps the business path less travelled, but it may be no coincidence that following a lifetime of education in the field, Beauvais' personal values and standards tie in rather pertinently with the industry itself. "Today's travellers are more discerning," continues Beauvais. "They seek singular experiences, they seek atmosphere. They endeavour to respect the natural environment, where possible they will even seek to give back to the local community they are visiting. In sum, they expect luxury, minus the gaudy excesses of yesteryear, but with a new sensitivity to aesthetics and good taste." Also informing the recent change in direction of Beauvais' own career path was a more personal journey, one which initially meant to take him away from the world of work. "After working since I was 25 years old because I had to, I suddenly decided to get out. I took a year out to get re-grounded, reconnected, take the time to think differently and do things differently."



Philanthropy meets business

During this time Beauvais travelled extensively as well as spending time with his family. He also spent a significant period of this time contributing to the Thai charities which inspire and inform an important part of the InVision ethos. Reflecting what he describes as "the corporate world's commitment to its communities, whether local, regional or international," Beauvais is director of Operation Smile, a foundation set up to serve Thai children affected with facial deformities, cleft lips and palates. He is also the founding director of the Amcham Thailand Charitable foundation which helps develop upcountry schools throughout Thailand. "I wanted to focus on what I could offer in terms of their corporate evolution," says Beauvais. "Charities often suffer from the same problem in that those people with the big hearts aren't necessarily those with the management skills, or who have the time to look at the structure or practicalities." He was rewarded by this experience with what he describes as "the highest levels of renewed enthusiasm and energy I'd experienced for years," which is now being tapped and further fuelled in the shape of InVision. Beauvais approach to business has similar echoes of a more enlightened



Empowering Thai staff

While waxing lyrically about the "amazing standards of service in Thailand" Beauvais also bemoans the fact that they all too often belie any real standards of quality or efficiency behind that initial point of contact. "I've found that one way we prevent service staff reaching their potential is by not giving them the empowerment to make their own decisions, and that given the dignity and respect to do so they will inevitably succeed." Blossoming into a fine flagship for new standards of efficiency, service and a progressively evolutionary approach to the industry, InVision launched its high-end brand of hotels, resort and residences, SOMA. Success for Beauvais seems defined very much in terms of personal sensibilities and responsibilities that are serendipitously in line with those of the new generation of customers he works so hard to cater for. But as he concludes, the experience and self-belief that drives the confidence behind InVision is also very much hard earned. "Ultimately of course we're driven by a financial mind rather than a foolish devil may care attitude, but after working those first 27 years to accumulate this wealth we're now in the luxurious position of being able to risk two thirds of what we've saved to achieve what we also believe in. I'm pleased and proud that people are now seeking us out to do new things too."