

RAISING THE STANDARD

From Gleneagles to London's luxury hotel scene, Natalie McNally reflects on a 30-year career in housekeeping and the experiences that shaped her leadership style. Now Director of Housekeeping at The Chancery Rosewood, she discusses team culture, the role of technology, and why the human touch remains at the heart of exceptional hospitality.

Could you share your journey to becoming Head of Housekeeping, and key experiences that shaped your leadership style?

My love for hospitality started at an early age, and I fell into housekeeping while at university studying hospitality management, when I secured a housekeeping placement at Gleneagles.

Once I graduated, I found a position as a Senior Housekeeper at Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, where I cemented my love for all things housekeeping.

Moving to London in my mid-20s, I secured a senior housekeeping role at The Landmark. Here I really learned the basics of managing a large, diverse team. Jane Croft, still a close friend, taught me the importance of planning and patience and there are several tools, learnt then, that I still use today. I was lucky to work with Geraldine Maursy for 12 years as she was a wonderful, supportive mentor.

Since then, I have held a few Executive Housekeeper roles across the city. I am passionate about luxury hospitality and guest service, as well as architecture and history. It has always been essential for me to love the building I work in, to feel proud of it. This means I naturally take ownership of the space. Having a happy team is key, and I have been so lucky to work with so many fabulous people.

What are some lesser-known tips or efficiencies you've discovered that maintain high standards while keeping your team motivated?

Even after 30 years, I am still learning and finding solutions. While opening a hotel of this size was a massive challenge, it is often the trivial things, like tree pollen on the portecochere, that can still flummox and stretch me.





I am very hands-on and as a leader and like to be seen as a part of the team. It is essential to respect and encourage all daily, we focus on standards, training and recognising performance. The team are motivated to maintain our high standards, and we have open communication and ensure that they are paid well for their role. I insist on being kind, ensuring rotas are posted well in advance, pay and holidays are accurate, day off requests honored, so that the team feel secure in the environment - this flexibility improves retention. A thank you goes a long way, and my door is always open. We run monthly competitions to encourage the team to excel at certain tasks and these are paramount to improving excellence. I also focus on progression, and develop clear progression pathways, as when people can see a future for themselves, engagement rises.

How has technology changed housekeeping in recent years? Are there any tools you now consider indispensable?

Technology has assisted in the daily allocation of tasks and management of productivity and performance. Online management tools help us speed up processes and maintain quality in a fast and ever-changing environment with constantly shifting priorities. Systems such as Know Cross ensure we always deliver on time. These systems also allow us to report on quality and measure standards quickly. RFID has been a game changer in terms of time saving. Being able to count linen in minutes rather than hours is a boom for any busy housekeeping department.

Housekeeping still relies on people, particularly at a luxury level, as we pride ourselves on offering intuitive and bespoke services.

People, teamwork, and organisation are at Housekeeping's core. Technology and innovation

are valuable, but the human touch remains essential. Personalisation will continue to be the future of luxury travel and experiences.

What advice would you offer someone aspiring to a long-term career in hotel housekeeping or hospitality management?

A career in housekeeping is extremely rewarding. There is the opportunity for work-life balance and the development of several transferable skills. I love the diversity of the role and its challenges. No day is ever the same; it is fast-paced and people-focussed.

What would you like to see evolve in hotel housekeeping over the next 1-3 years?

I would like to see housekeeping become a chosen career path rather than something people simply fall into. I want housekeeping to be recognised as a pinnacle of the hospitality industry, as it truly is the backbone of every exceptional hotel.

Hotel housekeeping needs to be recommended as a viable path to school leavers, as well as graduates. The Housekeeping Association needs to work with schools and colleges, to get interest in the department, before they pursue a career in Hospitality. There was a great deal of work before lockdown with Springboard and the UKHA, regarding shared knowledge, but I think this has really taken a back seat since, as we all tried to recover and survive after the pressures of Covid and Brexit. We need to start a campaign and improve the PR.

It would be fantastic to see more Housekeepers aspiring to be GM's, as most still take the Front office and F&B route.