



Manage by Heart

Mr. Darrel Cartwright, the new General Manager of The Park Lane Jakarta, opens up about his time in the hospitality industry, how to motivate a team, what sets The Park Lane Jakarta apart, and what home means to him.

Text by Dennis Latif | Photos by Ahmad Fazoni

Can you give our readers a little introduction to yourself? How did you get started in hospitality and what makes you love the hospitality industry?

I grew up in San Jose [California] and I worked as a waiter when I was in college. That was when I realized that I love to interact with people, I am a people person, and I thought that it would be interesting to develop a career in the hotel business. In this business, people come first and it did not take long for me to realize that the most important thing in the hospitality industry is not the product that you serve but more the experience that you deliver. If you create experiences that make guests want to come back again, you will create loyalty, and if you create loyalty there will be word of mouth; all of these things, if combined, will generate revenue for sure. And that is why I love this industry, because I get the chance to work with people and create experiences.

What does The Park Lane Jakarta offer guests that sets it apart from other properties?

There are so many hotels in Jakarta, and every hotel mostly offers the same thing for guests, TV in the room, clean towels, clean bathroom, amenities, etc. In terms of service, most hotels talk the same talk. Yes, we can deliver all these things to our customers, but most hotels forget that it is about creating experiences as well. It is also about creating an environment that makes people feel like people and makes them feel like they are in their own home. In addition, now we have the millennial generation, which grew up with technology, the internet and social media. This generation is looking for something that is fast, friendly, fun and different. They want to have their senses stimulated. That is why for them, the experience is even more important. Here at The Park Lane Jakarta, what we try to do is to generate those experiences. We ask ourselves what we are and who we want to be, and these thoughts led us to the vision: We want to be the first business lifestyle resort hotel in Jakarta.

What does that mean, business lifestyle resort hotel?

Sometimes on the weekend, people want to take a break, but they do not have time to travel to places such as Bali, Lombok or even just Bandung. So we came up with the staycation concept. Here at The Park Lane Jakarta, we create a resort-style environment, so people do not have

to fly to Bali to get the ambience, the atmosphere and the hype of tropical paradise. Guests can chill and relax by the pool, the children can have a great time in the Kids club, guests can have a romantic dinner with cocktails or champagne, go shopping at the nearby mall, and we also have a fun, relaxed and more casual staff, we even changed the staff uniforms to be more resort-like. We are trying to be less conservative than most business hotels.

Working in the fast-paced, dynamic hospitality industry requires constant energy and enthusiasm. How do you motivate yourself to give your best every day at work?

For me, when I wake up every day, I am motivated by the challenge of more. What that means is that every day is a new day, and every day we need to generate more revenue, more opportunities and more experiences for the guests and staff. We try to keep a rewarding environment, and in here we do not "boss" people but we "lead" them. It is important to be a good leader; the difference between a boss and a leader is a boss would say, "Hey you, go climb a mountain right now and I want it to be done by 5pm," but a leader would climb that mountain first, lower down the rope and pull the staff up. In here, we manage by heart, we treat everybody as an individual because we believe that everybody has hidden talents and capacities, and we want everyone to tap into that. So it's like a beehive mentality where everybody is working together in unison for the same goal.

You have worked in several interesting countries such as Japan, Vietnam and Kenya, all with different cultures, lifestyles and climates. What is the secret to feeling at home in new places and what does home mean to you?

If you strip away culture and language, the essence of every human being is the same. Because in the beginning we are born the same, but then the exposure from father, mother and culture changes us. So if you treat people like people, you show them love and respect, no matter what culture it is, you won't feel like a stranger. In this business, we hoteliers are like professional gypsies because we move from place to place. Especially as a General Manager, you will see a lot of GMs move from one place to another, it is part of our work. So for me, home is where I put my head and home is where I am now. ●

