

Elaine Durr on her 20 years in the tourism sector

Elaine Durr, operations director at World Leisure Holiday, has enjoyed a career spanning 22 years in the travel and leisure industry. Here she shares just how the industry has shaped her, the challenges she has faced and how she has overcome them...

How has the last 20 years of working in the tourism and hospitality industry shaped you?

The journey over the past 20 some years has been filled with so many memorable moments and of course some challenging ones. It is through these challenging moments that I was taught the art of successful people management. And the beautiful destinations that I have had the privilege to travel to over the past 20 years have been nothing short of incredible and helped mould a humble quality within.



What would you say is good about getting out of one's comfort zone?

Stepping out of one's comfort zone is never easy nor comfortable, but once the desired results are achieved, the feeling of accomplishment is really so worth it!

Have you always wanted to be a part of the hospitality and leisure industry – what is it that you enjoy?

Growing up, my role model was my grandmother. She was such an incredibly hard worker. There was always something to be done, no time to rest. Her motto was work hard, don't stop and you will reap the rewards. My aspiration was to follow in her footsteps, not in any particular industry but simply to be a "mini-me" and honour my grandmother's legacy. Once in the hospitality and leisure industry, the "travel bug" bit and I have thrived on the excitement within the industry. I couldn't imagine my career in any other industry.

What does a day in your life look like?

I enjoy the simple pleasures in life; besides my career, the most important people in my life are my family and my animals. A typical day for me starts at 4am with the feeding of my precious animals, followed by a full day at the office tackling any challenge that may come my way. The team that I have the privilege of working with are the best in the industry and I draw a lot of energy from them and vice versa due to the mutual respect amongst us all. After work, I love to get in a little bit of exercise before returning home.

What made you choose this career?

Literally by default! I was presented with an opportunity many years ago to be the executive PA for the managing director at World Leisure Holidays at that time. He had such a passion for the industry, and by working side by side with him, my passion and love for the industry was ignited.

Do you think it's important to have a month dedicated to women?

Absolutely! Depending on which generation (age group) you grew up in; moulded your expectations and beliefs on the role of women in society. Sadly, many women, to date still have this outdated thought and often fall victim to this belief. The younger generation is by far embracing the importance of women in society and in business, which leads to elevated

career paths and confidence levels. Hopefully, this will, in turn, be passed on to their children which will contribute towards the growth of women for the future.

▣ ***What challenges have you faced as a woman in your field?***

One of the biggest challenges women face would be to be underestimated and undervalued in the world of predominately male executives. I, however, am very fortunate in that our current World Leisure Holidays managing director, Ramesh Jeenarain values contributions that are made, irrespective of gender.

▣ ***Who has been your biggest influence and why?***

There have been so many influencers but the two that stand out are Butch Kerzner (late son of Sol Kerzer), as well as the founder of World Leisure Holidays, Bruce Hutchinson. Both of these gentlemen always displayed such integrity, passion and strength within the industry and played a fundamental role in my career path.

Kerzner's motto was that nothing was too much and everything could be done. I have always remembered and tried to live by these words.

▣ ***What is your message for Women's Month? Any words of wisdom to share?***

Believe in yourself, you can achieve anything that you put your mind to.

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