



THAILAND TOURISM FORUM PUSHES INNOVATION CENTRESTAGE AS INDUSTRY LEADERS DEBATE THE FUTURE OF HOSPITALITY

Thailand's largest annual tourism and hospitality event brings 800 delegates together for a fast-paced single-day show at Conrad Bangkok



From left: Proudputh Liptapanlop, Executive Director of Proud Real Estate; Ho Ren Yung, Senior Vice President of Brand & Commercial, Banyan Tree; Wallapa Traisorat, CEO & President of Asset World Corporation (AWC); Liz Perkins, Vice President of Revenue Management & Commercial Services for Asia Pacific, Hilton; and Bill Barnett, Managing Director of C9 Hotelworks

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BANGKOK, THAILAND: As Thailand's tourism industry powers its way into an accelerated period of recovery, with international arrivals pouring in and China poised to create the next big wave, what's the ensuing step for the Kingdom? The world has changed over the last three years so how is Thailand innovating to reshape the sector or is it back to the days of mass tourism?

Thailand Tourism Forum (TTF 2023) returned to Bangkok on Monday 16th January 2023 for its 12th annual edition to debate the issues and inspire future concepts. Running under the theme "Innovation in Hospitality", the creative half-day event featured top-level speakers and discussions on key issues set to influence the industry in the months and years to come.

An 800-strong crowd of travel and hospitality professionals took part and heard how Thailand's tourism machine needs to reinvent itself and become a pioneering force in branding, design and technology if it is to emerge stronger and more sustainable in the post-pandemic era.



Following an opening address by Bill Barnett, Managing Director of C9 Hotelworks, the event's organiser, who explained "Why Thailand Must Innovate", the forum's keynote speaker took to the stage. Wallapa Traisorat, CEO & President of Asset World Corporation (AWC), Thailand's leading hotel owner and developer, tackled the topic of "Creating a New Hospitality Landscape with Brands".

Other important issues on the agenda included "Disruption and Change in Hotel Technology & Distribution" with Liz Perkins, Hilton's Vice President of Revenue Management & Commercial Services for Asia Pacific, "Rethinking Thai Design Culture" with Ho Ren Yung, Banyan Tree's Senior Vice President of Brand & Commercial, and the "Challenges of Being a Hotel Owner" with Proudpath Liptapanlop, Executive Director of Proud Real Estate. Delegates were provided with an update on Thai hotel transactions and financing by JLL Hotels & Hospitality Group and an analysis of the competitiveness of the Thai hotel industry by STR Global, before Greenview founder Eric Ricaurte revealed his vision for the "Hotel of the Future".



On Stage: (left) Bill Barnett, Managing Director, C9 Hotelworks and TTF23 organiser; (right) Charles Blocker, Founder and CEO, IC Partners interviewing Wallapa Traisorat, CEO & President of Asset World Corporation

The major challenge that demands attention, according to C9's Bill Barnett is people, or the lack of them wanting to return the hospitality industry post Covid when over 1.45 million tourism jobs were lost. "Where's our pipeline of people? This is what will create success for the next generation. This no longer want to work in hotels so our mission must be how can we innovate products and bring the best and brightest people back to the industry. We have to pay higher wages. Now is the time for Thailand's hotels to change," said Mr Barnett.

The point was reiterated by Proudpath Liptapanlop, Executive Director, Proud Real Estate PLC who said that Covid was a real wake-up call for owners about how to take care of their people.

Ms. Wallapa Traisorat, CEO & President of AWC, argued that product and brand integration was the key innovation for the future. "For us it is all about creating happiness," she said. "We are all searching for how we can be fulfilled and I believe we need to look into partnerships with brands to create unique projects that are integrated with the destination and bring local communities into the hotel experience. It should be an integrated customer journey."

For Liz Perkins, Vice President of Revenue Management & Commercial Services for Hilton APAC, the most important thing is to create the right balance between technology and people. "The key is to successfully merge physical and digital to create seamless travel. During Covid we invested in technology. For example, we introduced digital keys for a fast track check-in. Customers can still go to reception but what we are doing differently is giving customers choice."

"For me innovation comes from constraints," added Ho Ren Yung, Senior Vice President – Brand and



Commercial, Banyan Tree Group. “We created the pool villa concept as we were not on the beach 30 years ago. Now we are introducing a product with no walls or doors to bring nature in.”

For more information, please visit www.thailandtourismforum.com

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