

How to... have a fabulous career in hospitality!

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As it's Women's Month, we thought we would share a round-up of reasons why some of the women working at City Lodge Hotel Group (CLHG) have found their niche in hospitality. For starters, take a look at how the group fares when it comes to women in the workplace in South Africa (similar statistics apply for other territories in which the group operates):

- Exco/top management – 50% female
- Senior management – 36% female
- Middle management – 62% female
- Junior management – 64% female
- Employees overall – 62% female

CLHG reports an increased interest in women pursuing a career in the hospitality industry, a high calibre of female student from universities applying for jobs and some 75% of the intake of Work Integrated Students in 2020 made up of women. It's also a member of the growing 30% Club, with at least 30% of its main board consisting of female directors. (The 30% Club is a global campaign led by CEOs taking action to increase gender diversity at board and senior management levels.)



Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo

Chief operating officer Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo says, "At City Lodge Hotel Group we are delighted to be an equal opportunity employer and to encourage our staff, particularly women, to grow their careers, strive to climb the corporate ladder, and fulfil their dreams. We all benefit, especially our guests. Given that August is Women's Month in South Africa, we want to celebrate all the women working in our organisation and recognise all their achievements in their various roles."

Women continue to work hard at finding their place in the sun, whilst enjoying an equitable career path. Even though the women of City Lodge Hotel Group are enjoying the recognition and deriving a fulfilling career and acceptance of their roles within the various ranks of the company, we paused and took the time to interview a cross-section of women of various ages, different races, religious inclinations, and roles within the company. We asked them to share their insights into how they have developed their careers in the hospitality industry:

- **Andrea Anderson**, general manager: operations at central office, and responsible for a portfolio of 13 hotels, rooms division and occupational health and safety which includes Covid-19
- **Anja Linde**, reservationist at Town Lodge George, Western Cape
- **Layla Rajah**, ambassador and junior assistant general manager for Courtyard Hotel Waterfall City Johannesburg and is also on the group's Accelerated Development and Deployment Programme
- **Lister Maphosa**, front office clerk at Courtyard Hotel Sandton, Johannesburg
- **Liz Clarke**, acting general manager at Town Lodge Midrand, Johannesburg (on loan from City Lodge Hotel Morningside)
- **Mumtaz Ganchi**, administration controller at City Lodge Hotel V&A Waterfront, Cape Town
- **Nathi Mnguni**, assistant general manager at Courtyard Hotel Rosebank, Johannesburg
- **Roslyn Khumalo**, general manager at Town Lodge Roodepoort, Johannesburg
- **Sinazo Mazantsana**, general manager at Road Lodge Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal
- **Ursula Cupido**, housekeeper at City Lodge Hotel GrandWest, Cape Town
- **Wania Malik**, food and beverage supervisor at Courtyard Hotel Rosebank, Johannesburg

1. What has been your winning formula?

Andrea: Passion for the industry and steering clear of “toxic positivity”.

Roslyn: Energy, approachability and staying calm in a crisis.

Sinazo: Attention to detail, solving problems efficiently and proactively, eagerness to learn new things and creativity.

Nathi: Enthusiasm, hard work and being a dedicated team player.

Liz: Grit, perseverance, passion for serving and an unwavering work ethic.

2. Where are today's hoteliers focused?

Andrea: In addition to myriad technological advancements, guests' expectations have changed, challenging us to find new ways of delivering experiences that are better than home.

Roslyn: Digital advances mean increased competition from internet marketing, bookings made via social media and online travel agencies. However, we benefit from digital revenue management tools and greater ease of communication with employees and guests.

Sinazo: Roles have become more diverse. Also, there is an influx of hospitality accommodation being listed on Airbnb and HomeAway by homeowners, which gives travellers alternative forms of accommodation to choose from.

3. Why are you in hospitality?

Layla: I have always favoured "acts of service" as a form of kindness and showing my appreciation. That developed into a career choice.

Wania: I grew up in the hospitality industry as my parents owned restaurants and a catering business. I made the decision in high school to further my studies and build a career in hospitality.

Lister: I have strong social and interpersonal skills, so it was only natural that I follow this path.

Mumtaz: I was intrigued by hotels and the positive energy that I always received from the hospitality industry while growing up. I had to explore and be a part of it.

Anja: I have always enjoyed working and interacting with people from a young age.

Ursula: It didn't start out as a career choice – I followed a job vacancy in the newspaper in 1992 and have loved it ever since.

4. What challenges do you face?

Andrea: Finding that “next thing” that will place us ahead of the competition.

Roslyn: Encouraging employees who are used to working in an office environment to take on more tasks.

Sinazo: The biggest challenge of being a black female general manager is getting over the hurdle of stereotypes and having to navigate the corporate space by continuously proving yourself and breaking down those walls and constraints mentally. This challenge in 2021 is much better than when I started in management in 2013.

Liz: Maintaining team cohesion to ensure everything runs smoothly all the time, and to ensure consistency between different shifts, so that everyone is on the same page all the time.

Layla: Navigating the different personalities that we encounter on a daily basis.

Lister: Trying to win back a guest that has been lost, which is why it's imperative to get it right the first time.

5. What is your leadership mantra in a crisis?

Andrea: Stay positive and be a sounding board. Allow people the space to be anxious, negative and stressed. By allowing small explosions to happen, we hopefully prevent the big ones.

Roslyn: Empower all employees to take on responsibilities that they normally would not have done before the pandemic.

Sinazo: Listen to your team with regards to the challenges that they face and allow them to propose solutions.

Nathi: Motivate and set clear objectives to the team, and provide ongoing training and feedback.

Liz: Lead by example, be on the floor with your team when it is needed, and clear communication.

6. What lessons have you learned during the pandemic?

Andrea: Resilience: adapting quickly to an ever-changing situation has been tough, but also rewarding.

Nathi: We need each other to get through each day, and are more determined to achieve the goals set at work and in our personal capacities.

Liz: Endurance and tenacity have brought us all together. A title is just a title – we are all equal and work together to get results no matter what we need to do.

Wania: The pandemic may have taken a lot from us, but not our education or skills.

Lister: Gratitude: we are privileged to still be working as some people in hospitality have lost their jobs.

Ursula: Be thankful, share where you can, be vigilant and protect yourself, and have faith over fear as you go about your day.

Mumtaz: Appreciate the small things in life.

7. What is the highlight of your day?

Layla: The possibility that one genuine act of personalised service could leave a lasting impression on our guests.

Wania: Networking opportunities that allow me to shape my career and enhance my skills set. The opportunity to showcase my creativity.

Lister: Meeting and interacting with people from all walks of life is enlightening, challenges your prejudices and helps you see things from a fresh perspective.

Mumtaz: My favourite part of being an admin controller is processing salaries and assisting staff where I can. I am part introvert, part extrovert, so my job suits me perfectly.

Anja: Doing something extra for guests to make them smile and organising conferencing functions – setting up décor and working out menus is essentially event planning and I love it.

Ursula: I like seeing my team happy and excited. The housekeeping department is our little business and we start every day creating a product and guest experience from scratch.

8. How do you turn around a tough day?

Mumtaz: Try again tomorrow.

Anja: Remember, there is always someone who is worse off than you – chin up.

Ursula: Don't give up – your down day may turn into a bright day and if not, it's a learning curve.

Wania: Upskill and reskill yourself.

Layla: Human nature encourages tough days as they help us appreciate the good ones.

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City Lodge Hotel

City Lodge Hotel Group has a variety of hotels dedicated to providing you with comfort at a level that suits you. With 5 Courtyard Hotels (480 rooms), 19 City Lodge Hotels (3281 rooms), 12 Town Lodges (1507 rooms) and 23 Road Lodges (2 272 rooms), the Group has a total of 7540 rooms and ranks among the 250 largest hotel chains in the world. We are dedicated to providing quality accommodation for business, leisure and 'bleisure' travellers in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Mozambique. From basic, functional rooms to magnificent luxury studios, we have the range and experience to give you unbelievable service and exceptional accommodation at a price you can afford and in a location near to where you want to be. Go to www.clhg.com for more information.

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