

Lie low and stay in your lane

 By [Guy Stehlik](#)

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2018 brought plenty of hours of spring cleaning at BON Hotels: we cleared out the cobwebs and passed on projects, properties and relationships that, like outdated clothing, no longer fit us nicely. The result was an interesting period of introspection and lying low.



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This 'keeping a low profile' has served me well, allowing me to confirm our core track and reassuring me that as hoteliers, it is important to reinforce, with both our owners and clients, that we all need to 'stay in our lanes'.

There's a terrible saying amongst hotel management companies suggesting that the last time an owner and a management company 'share a smile' is when they sign the management contract.

While it's shocking to think that this is a clandestine norm, to be honest, nothing can prepare you for the commencement of a real, nitty-gritty relationship between hotel owner and hotel management company. The secret to a successful relationship depends on a multitude of factors, but underpinning all, **the cornerstone and fundamental understanding is simple:**

One of you is an owner and one of you is an operator. And that's that.

But managing expectations is much easier than it sounds; this is why we kick off our relationship with owners with the BON Bill of Rights, a detailed document that outlines roles, responsibilities and rights of owners during the course of our relationship.

Make no bones about it, an investment into a hotel is a significant financial undertaking so we cannot fault a hotel owner for battling to 'let go'; however, it is the 'letting go' that allows a management company to do what they do best: administer, manage and market a hotel. In this undertaking, the guarantee is to enlist their best expertise in order to make a success of things.

Many hotel companies have merely owned a hotel. But I can attest that **owning a hotel and managing a hotel are poles apart**. We insist (having learnt the hard way) that our owners are fully aware of our expectations from them and, to the contrary, what they should expect from us. Hotel operators need to put their hands up and take responsibility for the good times as well as the bad. Being responsive in bad times is paramount, reacting when the hotel is under stress and flipping those situations into positives is part of the deal.

Surely we go into these contracts having done our due diligence and completely confident that we are capable of adding value?

Let's face it, Mr Hotshot hotel manager is not financially invested in a hotel he manages and therefore is not at any financial risk here, is he? Respecting the opposite workings of the relationship can only come from having a true understanding by having experienced both sides.

Listen, don't think that I don't enjoy the early stages of the relationship: the flirting, the courting and the allure of discovering if you really like each other is certainly all that it's cracked up to be. The true test for me, though, is what follows, a couple of months down the line when the masks are removed. Are we still cracking a smile?

We will be if we stay in our own lanes.

ABOUT GUY STEHLIK

Guy Stehlik is the CEO and founder of BON Hotels and Director of BON Hotels International West Africa. Having vast experience in all aspects of Hotel Management as well as having owned his own hotels, Guy created BON Hotels as an "owner-staff-community-guest" centric company to herald in and define an exciting new era in hotel management.

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