

## Seeds Under the Surface: A Hidden Opportunity Panel Discussion



**Irvin W. Sandman**  
Hospitality Industry Counselor  
Bar Admission: 1980 (WA)

Irv counsels hospitality companies about acquiring, financing, managing and franchising properties; all aspects of financially distressed hotels, condo hotels, and mixed use projects; developing and protecting technology, brands, e-commerce solutions, and other intellectual property; real estate associated with hotels and resorts; negotiating and drafting system license agreements, management agreements, strategic partnerships, and other relationships; managing employment and diversity matters; restructuring troubled properties; and litigating disputes.

Irv is the 2008 recipient of the national Anthony G. Marshall Award. Bestowed annually by the Board of the Hospitality Law Conference in Houston, Texas, the Marshall Award is awarded to an individual who has made pioneering and lasting contributions to the field of hospitality law. Over the last twenty years, he has served as lead counsel in hotel transactions worldwide representing asset values totaling in excess of \$1 billion. Irv is a frequent national speaker on hotel topics, having made recent presentations, for example, at the Lodging Conference in Phoenix and the Hospitality Law Conference in Houston.

Irv utilizes an extensive background of business and lodging industry experience accumulated in over 25 years of practice. Irv litigated business cases from 1980 to 1983. From 1983 to 1993 he established a recognized corporate recovery and business bankruptcy practice, in which he assisted hotel companies and shareholders in successfully addressing a wide range of corporate, financial, business, transactional, and courtroom challenges. In 1993, Irv established one of the nation's first hospitality industry teams. Since then, he has focused exclusively on helping hotel companies succeed, from structuring, consummating, and restructuring hotel deals of all kinds, to handling operational challenges, to strategically guiding disputes to resolution.

Irv is President and a founding board member of the Hospitality Industry Bar Association, past chair of the American Bar Association's Hospitality Industry Liaison Subcommittee, a charter member of the Academy of Hospitality Attorneys, a founding member of The Lodging Roundtable, and a board member of Seattle-King County Convention & Visitors Bureau. Irv chaired the Washington State Bar Association's Creditor/Debtor Section from 1988 to 1990 and was editor of its newsletter from 1983 to 2006.



**Murray Dow, II, President, Dow Hotel Company**

Murray is founder of The Dow Hotel Company (DHC), a hotel management and investment firm based in Seattle, Washington. The company currently manages ten upscale, full-service hotels in six states. DHC has established itself as an innovative and successful hospitality company.

Murray is a graduate of Western Washington University with a BA in Economics. He is Chairman of the Center for Excellence in Management Education (CEME) at WWU's College of Business and Economics. Dow was awarded the College of Business and Economics most distinguished executive award by Sigma Iota Epsilon in 2007.

Murray began his career with Westin Hotels at the Benson where he began in their management development program. He worked his way through all departments of the hotel and become the opening Assistant Director of Rooms at the Westin Detroit Plaza. Dow then spent over five years at Four Seasons Hotels in senior management at the Ritz Carlton Chicago, the Four Seasons Clift and as Resident Manager of the Four Seasons Olympic in Seattle. He was also Managing Director for Christensen Hotels in the Seattle area, and opening General Manager of the Boca Raton Marriott Hotel.

Prior to founding DHC in 1997, he was Executive Vice President of the first company known as HEI Hotels. Under Dow's tenure the company grew from one property to twenty with over \$200 million in sales. Dow is a member of Seattle's Lodging Roundtable which is concerned with travel and tourism issues impacting the lodging industry, and he is a frequent speaker for a wide range of travel and industry related organizations. He has three daughters, and is active in several community and charitable causes.



### **Jeff McKee, Managing Director, Premier Capital Associates**

Jeff is a 17-year veteran of the commercial finance industry with over 12 years focusing on hospitality real estate finance. He previously served as Senior Vice President of GE Commercial Finance building executive level relationships with the nation's top franchise companies and building a successful hotel finance division. Jeff built the hotel finance division of GE Commercial Finance from a start-up in 1995 to over \$1.7 billion in funded loans. Jeff has been quoted and published in several hotel industry periodicals and has been a frequent participant on hotel industry panels.

Jeff holds a Bachelor's Degree in Finance from Western Washington University.



### **James Simkins, Partner & CEO, MTM Luxury Lodging**

Partner since 2000 and named CEO in 2008, James Simkins also has a distinguished international career in some of the finest Westin Hotels & Resorts.

Covering five countries on four continents, he began his career at The Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1972. During a period of 10 years, he gained significant exposure in all operating and support functions of this trend-setting hotel. In early 1987, Simkins accepted a company transfer to the Kowloon Shangri-la as Executive Assistant (Resident) Manager. Operated by Westin, this Hong Kong hotel was regularly ranked in the top 20 in the world. A later transfer to the 1,473-room Westin Bonaventure in Los Angeles resulted in his promotion to Managing Director with the specific mission of resurrecting this property from

Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, the impact of the LA riots and the deterioration of the Los Angeles inner city.

Having successfully achieved these objectives in January 1993, Simkins was promoted to Vice President, Operations of Westin International Asia Pacific and Managing Director of The Westin Tokyo. He successfully opened this \$620 million project in October 1994 and within 26 months, achieved the position of top performing luxury hotel in all of Japan. During the same period, he provided operational oversight to all Westin properties in Asia with particular emphasis on the opening of The Westin Osaka. A final assignment to Australia to open the landmark Westin Sydney in time for the 2000 Summer Olympics was successfully accomplished prior to joining MTM.

James graduated with a business degree from the University of South Africa and attended the University of Witwatersrand, where he studied Civil Engineering. Simkins also has the AH&LA Institute Diploma and has lectured in Engineering for Hospitality Management for that organization. In all locations, he has assumed a leadership role within the industry and was acknowledged in 1996 by Leaders magazine as one of the world's leading Hotel Managers. For some years, the opportunity of participating in a hotel management company dedicated to innovative and entrepreneurial management of small luxury hotels has been a goal for Simkins. Being an officer and equity participant in MTM reunites him with his friend and colleague of many years, Jim Treadway, and fulfills that goal.

James is married with two adult children and resides in Redmond. His passions (in interchangeable order) are family, work, travel, classic cars, koi, gardening, fine wines and rugby.

## **Douglas N. Dreher, CHA, President & CEO of The Hotel Group**

He is responsible for all facets of the company which includes operations, financing, renovation, real estate acquisitions, new hotel development and strategic planning for THG's entire portfolio of managed and owned properties.



Prior to The Hotel Group, Doug worked for Westin Hotels & Resorts at the 1,474-room Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, Calif. where he served in numerous management positions. His other management experience includes the Beverly Garland Hotel in North Hollywood, Calif. and several restaurants in the Pacific Northwest.

Upon joining The Hotel Group in 1989 as a General Manager, Doug was quickly promoted to Regional Manager, supervising new construction projects in Nevada and Washington as well as properties in Arizona and California. In 1992 he was promoted to Vice President of Operations overseeing a multitude of projects including a resort in Washington State and the opening of a four-diamond hotel in Canada. Then in 1998, Doug was promoted to Executive Vice President where he was in charge of hotel operations, marketing and development.

His hotel operations experience includes supervising over 70 hotels in 15 States and Canada. Doug's leadership experience comprised of a wide array of properties including resorts, four-diamond and four-star hotels, and independent properties. He has overseen 20 new developments during his tenure with The Hotel Group. His franchise background involves most major brands including Marriott, Hilton, Doubletree, Radisson, Sheraton, Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn.

Doug holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Hotel & Restaurant Administration from Washington State University (WSU) where he has served as a guest lecturer. He was recently honored in 2007 as a distinguished alumnus for the 75th anniversary of the School of Hospitality Business Management at WSU for exemplary achievements in hospitality and contributions to WSU. He is a Certified Hotel Administrator (CHA) from the Educational Institute of the American Hotel & Lodging Association. Doug is also a past Chairman for the Washington Lodging Association (formerly Washington State Hotel & Lodging Association) and currently serves on the American Hotel & Lodging Association's Board of Directors representing multi-unit lodging companies. In 2004 he was recognized by the Puget Sound Business Journal for the annual "40 under 40" distinguished leaders in the Puget Sound. Doug is a current member of the Lodging Industry Investment Council (LIIC), a think tank comprised of leading hotel and real estate executives which disseminates investment trends to the hospitality industry.