This summer alone, My Place is celebrating several milestones—from rolling out its Stay Rewarded loyalty program in June and officially joining the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) to opening its 50th property in the United States by the end of the summer. Rivett told LODGING that he expects the brand’s growth to only accelerate in the coming years now that it has built a solid footing of talented staff and strong relationships with franchisees and industry partners.

“Franchise sales and the growth of a brand are more cumulative than incremental,” he explains. Between the hotels currently under construction and those in the pipeline, Rivett anticipates reaching 75 open properties in the next six months and 100 in the next 12 months. Rivett also has his sights set on expanding My Place’s footprint in the U.S. Southeast and Northeast.

As the brand scales up, Rivett stresses the importance of growing and investing in its culture and people. “They create the foundation,” Rivett explains. “That’s why so much of what we do is relationship-based and about having fun, because if you don’t enjoy what you’re doing and the people you’re working around, it’s going to be more difficult to engage and invest, and that’s what scaling the company is going to require.”

While on the road attending groundbreakings and property openings, Rivett and the My Place team connect with franchisees, developers, and communities and create memorable experiences in each location—whether sharing a round of golf or a meal at a local restaurant. He explains that each trip is composed of both calculable and incalculable successes—from the number of franchise sales and new contacts to the relationships that are built.
to encouraging brand engagement on social media. “All of those things are individual successes, but they’re not necessarily the only successes. They’re the tangible ones. But the intangible part is that each time we go on a trip, there’s always talk of how much fun we had or something we experienced on the prior trip. It builds expectations so you look forward to what’s going to happen next.”

With so much focus on hiring and retaining the right people to propel growth, Rivett says that My Place is ramping up its investment in the recruiting and interviewing process. “It’s always challenging to get comfortable with a person who’s thinking about joining your company,” he says. If a potential hire is willing to provide the time, the company invites them to spend some time with its employees and My Place University training programs. “We’re looking at making a bigger commitment so that the people who do come on board with us are more certain that this is where they want to be and we’re more certain that they’re the person we want to work with.”

He adds that another critical piece of retention is providing opportunities for existing employees to experience areas of the company outside of their daily job responsibilities—advice Rivett learned from Flo Allen, a 30-year employee of Super 8 Motels who became vice president of training in 1988. “It’s really important for the revenue management person, who’s mostly in the office and on the phone talking with franchisees and operators, to be able to get out to a brand opening, to travel out to a property and visit with the staff, and to come to the convention and engage with franchisees, partners, and vendors,” Rivett explains.

**HOSPITABLE MASCOT**  
Ryan Rivett and Terry Kline, My Place’s EVP of Franchise Development (far left), pose with Pineapple Pete and My Place franchisees at a recent grand opening in Kalispell, Mont.

**TECH TALK**

HITEC 2019 gave hotel technology leaders an opportunity to talk about how the industry is evolving.

“Disruption is fundamental to progress. And many people will say, ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.’ Well, if you follow that philosophy, anything that works will continue to work the same way all the time. Sometimes, you have to break something to find a better way to do it.”

**DR. RAVI MEHROTRA**
Founder, iDeaS

“I see technology evolving to be able to solve more or different problems. The safety button is a start, but it’s not right for every situation—for example, an active shooter or a guest who goes on a destructive rampage. We need to provide solutions for situations that go beyond its current design.”

**PARMINDER BATRA**
CEO, TraknProtect

“One of the biggest needs a human being has is to feel safe and secure, and I do think that at some point, there may be something of a revolt, because every day our safety and security is being threatened.”

**PETER STREBEL**
President, Omni Hotels & Resort

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**GOOD ADVICE**

Ryan Rivett, CEO and president of My Place Hotels, shares his insights on what it takes to build strong and lasting relationships between franchisees and a brand.

1. **Transparency.** “Transparency in initial discussions has been extremely important.”

2. **First-hand experience.** “Being able to honestly say that, on a daily basis, we are in the same position that you are—we are franchisees, we are hotel operators, we are hotel developers and builders. We have walked in the shoes of a franchisee.”

3. **Time.** “Time spent developing and understanding relationships is extremely important.”
My Place recently made another significant commitment to workforce development when the company announced its partnership with AHLA in June. “It has already been benefiting franchisees and the brand,” Rivett says. “It’s impossible not to recognize the value that AHLA is bringing to the hospitality industry. We have been beneficiaries not only of their activities in political advocacy, but also in training and providing support to operators and developers.”

Rivett maintains that the hospitality industry’s continued prosperity relies on the people who serve as the foundation of its brands. “The hospitality industry is so heavily laden with people—whether on the corporate side or the consumer side. The biggest challenge is just making sure that we are doing a good job of embracing them,” Rivett says. “That’s probably the thing that keeps me going the most—trying to understand and continue to improve in addressing those challenges.”