

# ‘Feeling’ The Relationship Principle – The Secret To Hospitality Success

**P**oet/author Maya Angelou and the hospitality industry might seem like an unlikely combination, but one of her famous quotes couldn't be more on-point for our business segment. *“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*

Naturally there is a huge emphasis on crafting an inspiring guest experience, but how many hotel companies direct that same energy to cultivating an equally inspiring business culture that flows throughout and beyond the organization? And, how many are successful at expressing it in such a way that it's not only heard and seen, but felt?

As our very first employee, I believe My Place Hotels is one of them. Since day one, we've been a company that aspires to be America's Newest and Best, rather than the newest and next. As such, the longevity of our brand and its mission is guided by our most defining core value: Relationship.

Just as many great opportunities are realized, my own story with My Place begins at my relationship with our founders Ron Rivett and his grandson Ryan. Before growing into a franchising company with over 120 hotels in the pipeline, and before opening over 40 hotels in the few years since launch, My Place was and has always been uniquely positioned to grow from their family's bedrock of experience.

Since starting with the company in 2012, Ron and Ryan not only shared their vision for the My Place venture with me, but instilled within me a perspective and passion that's been decades in the making. From Ron, I gained the candid insight of a successful lodging pioneer, franchisor and franchisee; and from Ryan, his diligent leadership, keen awareness and boundless energy. While I recognize how unique that experience is in hospitality nowadays, it's an experience I share with each and every one of our franchisees, staff and operators.



My Place staff from left: Ngoc Thach, Nicole Spaeth, Shirley Sharpe, Sarah Dinger, Sarah Hogg



Yet, that's only where it begins. While all of us are attracted to the energy and expertise of our founders, the passionate team of people they've mentored and the product we develop and refine is key to repeating success.

We started with and will continue to grow from an operator's perspective. As a brand, this is our promise to ourselves, our franchisees and operators. It is through our delivery of that promise that we find integrity, another My Place core value.

What's most indicative of the integrity of our product and relationships? Repeating success with our franchise and operating partners. Over 60% of My Place franchisees have executed multiple agreements, and the balance of them will – they just haven't yet.

In seeing our footprint grow from the first location as well as our company grow from its first employee, I've also recognized that while the number of new relationships formed may be a measure of growth, the real indicator of our success lies in our ability to maintain relationships despite our rapid growth. In doing so, My Place culture goes full circle.

Anna, My Place Hotels Regional Manager, Thirty-Nine 23 Management, LLC concurs. “Listening and being committed to the growth of the team helps everyone become invested in what they do. And, when we serve each other as a team, it overflows abundantly to our guests.”

With the relationship principle being a primary key to our success, we'll continue to invest in gathering our family of franchisees, operators and hospitality partners as often as possible. Just as our convention and the dozens of other gatherings throughout the year are not simply sales objectives, the idea of being a family is not cliché at My Place. Here, handshakes

are quickly replaced by hugs. Bringing people together and building relationships moves the collective forward, much like a simple family dinner.

Melissa, Regional Sales Director, Pacific Northwest My Place Hotels, LLC. puts it this way. “At the annual convention, I see new faces become old friends year after year. We walk away with more knowledge and stronger bonds that will last a lifetime.”

We will also continue to celebrate our franchisee's success as our own. The My Place HQ team broke records for traveling to grand opening and groundbreakings last month, and at one point celebrated three events over the course of 12 hours and a few thousand miles. And, even as the time between openings and other milestones grows shorter, I foresee us celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup> and 1,000<sup>th</sup> franchises with as much enthusiasm as the very first.

These are the commitments we won't lose sight of because, at the end of the day, every moment we have to build a relationship, with each other, our guests, our owners, and our product is a moment where My Place has grown.

Lee, General Manager, My Place Hotel in Marquette, MI, sums it up well. “My Place culture is all about building relationships with individual guests, groups, companies and staff. It's through these relationships – even more than the product, even more than the affordable rates – that we find success.”

Be poetic in your hospitality approach. In our pursuit of personal and professional growth in hospitality, it's important to recognize what really engages us at our core. Don't just create a company culture – authentically live it every day by enriching relationships – and make everyone you interact with feel it.