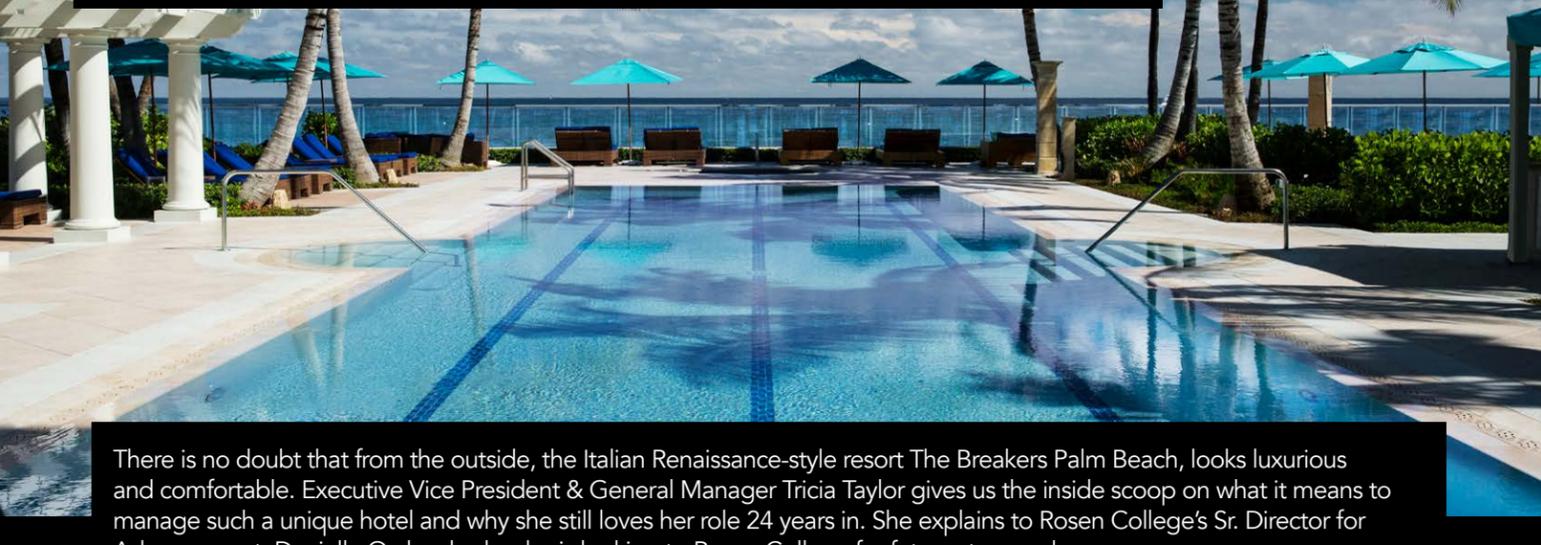


# THE BREAKERS:

## How to make it in luxury hospitality management



There is no doubt that from the outside, the Italian Renaissance-style resort The Breakers Palm Beach, looks luxurious and comfortable. Executive Vice President & General Manager Tricia Taylor gives us the inside scoop on what it means to manage such a unique hotel and why she still loves her role 24 years in. She explains to Rosen College's Sr. Director for Advancement, Danielle Orchard, why she is looking to Rosen College for future star employees.

The Breakers Palm Beach is one of the most iconic resorts in the United States. Located in South Florida, it offers its guests numerous choices, from nine restaurants ranging from casual beachfront to stylishly sophisticated and a world-class private beach club with four pools, five whirlpool spas, 25 poolside bungalows and a variety of on-site watersports. Additional amenities include two championship golf courses, 10 Har-Tru tennis courts, a Forbes Five-Star spa, an indoor-outdoor oceanfront fitness center, 12 signature on-site boutiques and a Family Entertainment Center with an extensive program of activities for children.

So, what does it take to give guests the experience of a lifetime? Is it possible to meet the desires and needs of customers while maintaining an inspiring and supportive working environment for employees? In this interview, Rosen College's Danielle Orchard speaks with Executive Vice President & General Manager Tricia Taylor about starting her career in Housekeeping, becoming the first female executive in roles across the organization, as well as what The Breakers means to her

personally, to the staff and the wider Palm Beach community.

### HI TRICIA! TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

My hospitality roots begin in Washington state. I grew up near Seattle where my grandparents built, owned and operated two motels, so perhaps I inherited my passion for hospitality. My teenage years were spent stocking vending machines, cleaning rooms and helping wherever needed. Now, with years of work and life experience, and some reflection, I appreciate my upbringing in numerous ways. I recognize the impact of watching my grandmother take care of guests and my grandfather manage the properties personally. I was raised with the expectation to work hard, do whatever needs to be done, and to be kind and help others.

### WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE?

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree with distinction in Hotel Administration from Cornell University in beautiful Ithaca, New York. My first 'real job' after graduation was at the famed Waldorf-Astoria hotel

in New York City. I participated in Hilton's Management Training Program in the Rooms Division and my first assignment was to work in the hotel's Housekeeping Department. A year later, The Breakers Palm Beach lured me away from New York, which is why I moved to Florida and happily remain here. I have a special connection with my work and with my employer that I believe is unique and has been reflected in my growth within the company over the last 24 years.

### WHEN DID YOU JOIN THE BREAKERS AND HOW HAS YOUR CAREER PATH UNFOLDED?

My Breakers career started in Housekeeping in 1996; my title was Assistant Executive Housekeeper which was an entry-level management role. I did whatever was needed from inspecting rooms, taking inventory, creating the schedule, checking payroll and cleaning.

My peers at the time did not understand why I wanted to work in Housekeeping. As an honors graduate from an Ivy League university and young working professional for two well-known landmark luxury properties, my



The Breakers' resort is 'breathtakingly beautiful' and has 'everything you could wish for'.

choice to work in Housekeeping was criticized by many people I knew at the time.

In my opinion, working in Housekeeping remains under-rated and perhaps misunderstood. We know it is essential and that cleanliness is a fundamental requirement, but this division of hotel operations offers highly valuable experience. You have the opportunity to learn your hotel product, earn instant financial responsibility and interact with numerous departments. More importantly, you have the forum to develop your human relations, communications and leadership skills. You can build a strong foundation for career success, while making a difference in people's lives; you can take care of your hotel property and the team that makes it happen; and you can make their tough work as pleasant as possible, while contributing to their job and personal fulfillment. When college students ask me about a career in hotel operations, I proudly share my perspective that you will learn more from managing a challenging area than an easier, seemingly more glamorous one.

From my start in Housekeeping, I worked my way up through the Rooms Division, supervising a growing number of departments, including Front Office, Bell Services, Concierge, Valet, Housekeeping, Laundry and more.

At age 28, I was promoted to Rooms Division Executive and appointed to the company's Executive Group. This was a noteworthy milestone in my career, as I was the youngest member at the time and the first female to join the committee.

I was promoted to Hotel Manager at age 29, working full-time, while earning my MBA

**I was raised with the expectation to work hard, do whatever needs to be done and to be kind and help others.**

locally from Florida Atlantic University. I was simultaneously a full-time Hotel Manager and full-time student. I share this as I greatly value education and continuous learning, even when it's not convenient or easy. I believe taking responsibility and initiative for your own growth and development has to be a top personal priority.

At age 32, my most important job opportunity arrived: motherhood. Three years later, the job doubled with the arrival of my second daughter. Managing a great hotel is definitely rewarding, but being a mom to two wonderful children is the best role I could ever ask for.

My responsibilities at work continued to expand. I was appointed General Manager in 2010, and five years later was promoted to Senior Vice President with full oversight of our business operations. In 2019, I became Executive Vice President & General Manager. While these are career milestones for me personally, they generate interest as they mark the first time

a female executive achieved these roles in our organization. I am fortunate to report to an outstanding leader in our industry, Mr. Paul Leone, the president and CEO of Flagler System Inc.

### CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE BREAKERS?

Everything you could wish for in a luxury resort experience can be found at The Breakers. Over 140-acres of oceanfront paradise with all the amenities imaginable: nine restaurants, 12 boutiques, four pools, bungalows, golf, tennis, a spa, children's activities and more.

## Thought Leader



### Tricia Taylor

**Executive Vice President & General Manager, The Breakers Palm Beach**  
W: [www.thebreakers.com](http://www.thebreakers.com).

Our resort has a rich, celebrated American history. It remains a tribute to its founder, Henry Morrison Flagler, the man who originally built

## **My peers at the time did not understand why I wanted to work in Housekeeping.**

The Breakers in 1896 and created tourism for our state, transforming South Florida into an enduring vacation destination. Our company has thrived under the ownership of Flagler's heirs - the Kenan family - whom I consider myself truly blessed to work for. The family's commitment to the resort and the well-being of the team is unrivaled. We are proud to be the only large, historic luxury hotel that remains in the hands of its original owners, and to be the longest continuously operating business in our state.

### **WHAT MAKES THE BREAKERS SPECIAL AND UNIQUE?**

In addition to our incredible owners, it is the team and our purpose that make The Breakers special.

The team is the heart and soul of our company. We have over 2,200 associates. While our property is breathtakingly beautiful, it is the genuine, caring service the team provides that always impresses our guests.

Our business purpose is unique. Beyond providing exceptional service, we strive



The Breakers' heritage is unique.

to make a positive impact in the lives of our team members, guests and community. Our culture prioritizes and supports team member well-being, in all its aspects, be it physical, emotional, mental or financial, and highly encourages social impact in Palm Beach County and beyond.

### **WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES?**

My job includes what you would likely expect, such as supervising large teams and overseeing operations. However, it involves much more. From my perspective, being a leader at work includes making

continuous progress and improvement with team satisfaction, guest satisfaction, financial performance, sustainability and social impact.

My ongoing responsibility is to refine and improve the employee experience. I consider myself a guardian of our culture, which should not only be nurtured and celebrated, but defended and protected at all times. Our culture is key to our business success, and I take personal satisfaction in helping build and support a workplace in which people truly enjoy working.

To achieve customer satisfaction, we continuously elevate the guest experience and introduce new and improved products and services. If a guest has concerns, it is ultimately my responsibility, and I take that seriously. I also prioritize our efforts to minimize our impact on the environment and maximize our impact in the community. You can see The Breakers team in action throughout our County, as we proudly volunteer over 30,000 hours per year.



Guests are impressed by the team's service.

### **HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA (UCF)?**

I am proud of my association with the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. My familiarity with the school began when I took notice of outstanding young performers at The Breakers. With a little investigation, I quickly learned what they all had in common: degrees from UCF, the majority of which were earned from Rosen. I am pleased to volunteer my time to assist students, visit classes, provide employment opportunities and serve on the College's advisory board.

Earlier I shared what I think makes The Breakers unique. For Rosen, the answers are similar. The people make the College special, beginning with Harris Rosen and the original Dean, Dr. Abraham Pizam, to the consistently high-quality students, and Dr. Youcheng Wang, who continues the legacy. They all reflect the college's mission, vision, values and service promise.

The College is not resting on the laurels of its current success; it is driven, relentlessly pursuing growth and recognized as a leader in hospitality education with no end in sight. Rosen values professionalism, leadership and service, and it shows. I deeply respect and admire the school's accelerated progress over its relatively young history, and I am sincerely excited to witness the next chapter for Rosen.

### **ANY CLOSING THOUGHTS?**

GO KNIGHTS!

To find out more about The Breakers Palm Beach, you can visit [www.thebreakers.com](http://www.thebreakers.com).



Interview conducted by **Danielle Orchard, Sr.**, Director for Advancement at Rosen College of Hospitality Management.