

People-in-Travel

Tracking Travel's Leaders



From Travel Business Analyst

Retro Regent

The new owners of Regent Hotels have named Robert Burns as honorary chairman and Ralf Ohletz as president.

In May's PinT, we said new owner Steven Pan - chairman of Formosa International Hotels and now also of Regent - had made his first mistake when he said Regent's operating team would come from Formosa's franchised Regent hotel in Taipei. Fortunately, we added that our final comment would wait until Pan named the executives.

Now he has done so, we can praise his choice - although we now wonder why he said the team would come from the Taipei Regent...

But there is more. Pan overstates (and sometimes misstates) the concept, quality, and standing of the Taipei Regent. But this is unimportant if he understands the essential message of Regent.

Yes, the quality concept of the Regent group was launched by Burns, but it was a dynamic team with him, Adrian Zecha, and Georg Rafael. And Rudy Greiner, the first general manager of the Hong Kong Regent (and, for less than a year, president of the Regent group).

The other factor was their creation, the Hong Kong Regent hotel, now the InterContinental. It was built as the group's flagship, and it was a spectacular flagship (SF).

To rebuild Regent, Pan also needs an SF. Too difficult in Hong Kong - because there are now many spectacular hotels there. Pan says he wants to bring Regent back to Asia. So although that appears to mean the SF should be in Asia, we think a non-Asian capital would be better. And in one of just four cities - alphabetically, Berlin, London, New York, Paris. If Asia, the only 'world capital' that would be suitable is Beijing or Shanghai. In the past it would be

Tokyo, but Japan's image is fading.

Regent is already operating a good standard hotel in Beijing - with those admittedly high Regent standards. So that leaves Shanghai. Again, that city that has good hotels, so creating an SF would be hard.

Then there are those two men - Burns and Ohletz. Despite his age (85), Burns is still capable, but it is likely that Pan, only 45, wants Burns for the image and message, and not so much his skills.

Pan also overstates Ohletz's ex-

knew what was going on.

Ohletz, 48, is German, although most of his career has been outside the country. He may live up to the Regent task, although to date he has been a competent No2. We suspect that Pan will be the person who leads the company, and its direction will be decided by him. Burns and Ohletz may not have much influence over that, although this remains to be seen.

Briefs

- Isadore Sharp, founder, chairman, and still CEO of Four Seasons Hotels, has given up his CEO role. Taking it is **Kathleen Taylor**, 52, who has been with FS for 21 years. She became president and COO in 2007, in a slight change of roles when Wolf Hengst retired as president.

More scheduled for next month's PinT.

- White elephant gets new mahout.

Canada's Asian Coast Development, which plans a Las Vegas-style casino resort in south Vietnam, has appointed **Lloyd Nathan** as CEO. Nathan has been president of an MGM company, MGM Mirage Global Gaming Development in Las Vegas; he joined MGMM only in 2002, and has held three jobs in three MGM companies in London, Hong Kong, and Las Vegas. The MGM company is a partner in the Vietnam development.

We believe that despite the MGMM link, there will be operational difficulties with the resort development. And even if it is built on time (it is due in 2013), there is not the market support that there is for other developments in the region, such as in Macau and Singapore.

Will the so-called Ho Tram Strip with its MGM Grand Ho Tram become a white elephant?



Steven Pan

perience, linking him constantly to Adrian Zecha (through Zecha's link with GHM, where Ohletz worked as EVP), although Ohletz also has a strong link with other groups such as Mandarin Oriental. At GHM, he reported to Hans Jenni, who has been there since the start. Or No3, counting Zecha's chairman's role (though at arm's length) at GHM.

Pan also notes Ohletz's involvement in Beaufort Hotels, another group associated with Zecha. But Beaufort was founded by Siegfried Beil, and the corporate twists between Beaufort, Zecha, and others, are probably something that Ohletz might prefer to keep quiet - if he

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