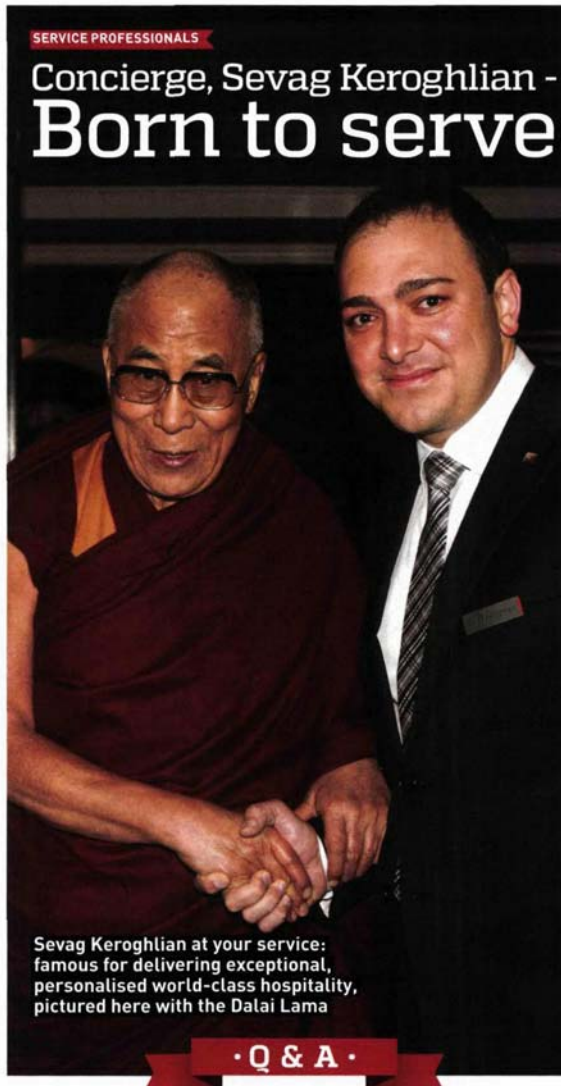




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Sevag Keroghlian at your service: famous for delivering exceptional, personalised world-class hospitality, pictured here with the Dalai Lama

Born in Armenia, Sevag Keroghlian worked in fashion for Giorgio Armani before heading to Australia in 2002 and starting his career in hospitality. He believes his European upbringing – where family traditions revolve around fine food and conviviality with family and friends – has inspired his passion for hospitality.

After five years in Australia, Sevag moved to New Zealand in 2007, wishing to play a part in the industry as it prepared for the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

Fluent in 3 languages, he revels in communicating with people from diverse cultures, and with 14 years' experience in hospitality, Sevag is becoming more involved in supporting and nurturing the younger generation who have a passion for the industry too. Until recently, Sevag was Front Office Manager at Pullman Auckland, but is now consulting for Pullman Melbourne, formerly Hilton on the Park, which has recently been purchased by Accor. In the same role, Sevag will help drive the Pullman culture within the team. He was also pivotal in introducing the Pullman value proposition when the chain took over the Hyatt Auckland in Auckland in 2011.

WHEN DID YOUR CAREER IN HOSPITALITY BEGIN?

Moving to Australia, aged 22, my first job was in Housekeeping at the Radisson Plaza Hotel Sydney. I was quickly promoted to a supervisor's role, then moved on to Night Receptionist at the Holiday Inn, before I was offered a job at Carlton Crest (currently Novotel Hotel) in Concierge in 2004. I quickly realised I really enjoyed working with people in the front line. Most months I was employee of the month and the front office manager promoted me to a Guest Services agent role. Keen to see more of Australia, I moved to the Gold Coast in 2006, joining the Sheraton Mirage Resort & Spa in Guest Services.

HOW MUCH HAVE YOUR EXPERIENCES GROWING UP IN EUROPE INFLUENCED YOUR STYLE OF HOSPITALITY?

Family is very important to Armenian culture and we love people, food, music and art. At work my team are like a family; we look after each other and our guests can feel that sense of family.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO NEW ZEALAND?

In 2007, it felt time for another move. My first placement was at Hilton Auckland, where I worked for three years. I was placed runner up in the prestigious AICR's Receptionist of the Year competition in 2009, runner up for the Auckland Region and voted 2nd best receptionist in the county. That year I also won Employee of the Year at the Hilton, as well as a scholarship to complete a Hospitality Management Diploma. As RWC drew nearer, I accepted the position of Guest Services Supervisor at SkyCity Grand Hotel – an amazing experience.

Management was the next logical step with the Front Office Manager role at the Rendezvous Grand Hotel Auckland in 2012, where I took great pride in enhancing the service culture within the hotel and lifting the team spirit. Then the Pullman beckoned; it had recently taken over from Hyatt and needed a charismatic front office leader and I was nominated for the Star award for Accor Hotels. Two years later, we have an exceptional front office team; one of our receptionists won the AICR Best Receptionist in NZ title last year, and I recently accepted the AICR's proposal to be treasurer and secretary for AICR New Zealand, a role that will assist me in supporting and nurturing the younger generation.

CAN YOU NAME SOME CAREER HIGHLIGHTS?

Working for the Conrad Treasury in Brisbane in guest relations, where I looked after the then Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Beyonce and Chris Brown, to name a few luminaries. And as guest services supervisor at SkyCity Grand Hotel during New Zealand's Rugby World Cup in 2011, I looked after Heads of State, visiting royalty, dignitaries and celebrities.

IS IT MORE DIFFICULT FIND STAFF WHO ARE HAPPY TO EXUDE THE HOSPITALITY GENE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS?

With technology taking over so fast, people skills are dying down. It is harder to find people with high customer service passion, and maintaining staff in hospitality is also hard as people move on to higher paid jobs. Training and keeping employees engaged is essential for keeping high standards.

ANY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE LOCAL HOSPITALITY SCENE?

Long hours can take a toll on one's personal life and it's always a struggle to achieve work/life balance because working in hospitality is more like a lifestyle than just a job.

WHERE IS YOUR FAVOURITE HOSPITALITY PROPERTY?

Four Seasons Hotel George V, Paris – it's simply stunning and traditional.

DO YOU HAVE A MESSAGE TO THE INDUSTRY?

Love what you do and do it with a passion. ■