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THE SEG ALUMNI NETWORK MAGAZINE
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Dear SEG Alumni Network,

Welcome to the Fall 2026 edition of the SEG Alumni Newsletter.

As we begin a new academic season, it is a pleasure to reconnect with our global alumni community and share the latest updates, achievements, and opportunities from across the SEG network. Each edition of this newsletter is designed to keep you closely connected to the institution, your fellow alumni, and the wider industry landscape in which so many of you continue to make an impact.

This fall marks another period of growth and momentum across our campuses and partner network. We continue to see strong engagement between students, alumni, and industry partners. And new collaborations, internship pathways, and career opportunities are emerging across key sectors, including hospitality, luxury, finance, and beyond. Our alumni remain at the heart of this ecosystem, contributing not only as professionals but also as mentors, recruiters, and ambassadors of SEG values worldwide.

In this edition, you will find highlights from recent events, updates on institutional initiatives, and stories that showcase the diverse journeys of our alumni community. We are particularly pleased to feature success stories that reflect the international reach of graduates from each of our five schools and the continued strength of our industry relationships.

We also take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing engagement and support. Whether you are actively involved in mentoring, recruiting, or simply staying connected, your contribution helps strengthen the value of the SEG network for current students and fellow graduates alike.

We hope you enjoy this edition and feel inspired by the stories and opportunities it contains. We look forward to staying connected with you throughout 2026 and beyond.



Sincerely,

Ulrika Björklund

Ulrika Björklund
Executive Director
Industry Affairs & Career Services
Swiss Education Group

Saketh Seelamanthula

Saketh Seelamanthula
Alumni Coordinator Intern
Swiss Education Group



MEET OUR NEW ACADEMIC DEAN:

A Conversation with Dr. Antonina Santalova



As we welcome Dr. Santalova as the new Academic Dean & Associate Professor of César Ritz Colleges, we invited her to share her background, vision, and aspirations for the school and its alumni community.

▲ Could you tell our alumni a little about yourself and your professional journey?

My entire journey in education comes down to one core belief: education changes lives. This belief comes from my own life story. Learning English at a top school in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan gave me an early advantage, opening doors to serving at the Ministry of Education and Culture, in collaboration with international organizations and banks. In this period I managed reforms, secured major development funding, and helped underprivileged youth. I then pursued a master's and ultimately a doctorate in Social Policy, completed at the University of Oxford. I share more about this journey in the feature article, [The Power of Education](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/power-education-how-learning-transformed-6xsee/) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/power-education-how-learning-transformed-6xsee/>.

Over the last almost three decades, I've had the privilege of working as an academic, entrepreneur, and leader in several countries. Beyond teaching at Oxford and sitting on boards in its Primary Care Department, I've chaired a think tank, launched an educational startup, and served as Dean at both an American business school and a Swiss hospitality institution. Over the years, my mission stays the same: to empower students with an education that blends strong academic foundations, modern technology, and deep human empathy.

What attracted you to César Ritz Colleges Switzerland?

César Ritz Colleges has a proud heritage, but what truly brought me here is our shared vision of what hospitality really means. To us, hospitality isn't just about hotels, restaurants, or retreats – it's primarily about the art of leading people with empathy, inclusion, and care.

We build leaders who are daring enough to lead not just for revenue growth, but to create meaningful social impact and champion a thoughtful, responsible attitude toward our environment. I wanted to be part of a community that honors tradition while equipping students with the modern tools and innovator mindset they need to make a genuine, lasting difference in the world.

What are your first impressions of the students, faculty, and campus community?

I've been deeply moved by the warmth, curiosity, and genuine care across our campus. Even in a fast-paced daily life at the campus, our faculty and team never miss a chance to pause, shake a hand, and ask how someone is truly doing. We have a real sense of family here, and our students feel it deeply. I see our students rushing to support one another and throwing themselves into campus life. They aren't just doing it to pad their CVs with major events, they are creating thoughtful micro-experiences that make their peers feel heard, valued, and genuinely cared for. Isn't that what we all need today? In a highly competitive world, it is a rare gift to be part of a community that offers you a helping hand rather than an elbow.





▲ What do you see as the greatest strengths of a César Ritz Colleges education?

By opening his iconic Ritz hotels in Paris (1898) and London (1906), César Ritz revolutionized hospitality. He turned a simple room service into the art of human connection, empathy, and genuine care. His legacy shapes our education here today. Our greatest strength is teaching students how to lead through service. Our programs are built by pairing a strong foundation in business, science, AI, and languages with vital soft skills and emotional intelligence. We prepare our graduates to connect deeply with people, lead with empathy in any client-oriented industry, and create a lasting, positive impact on their communities.

▲ Hospitality continues to evolve rapidly. How do you see hospitality education adapting to future industry needs?

We view hospitality in the broadest possible sense. Today, service and care apply to almost every industry. To stay ahead, our programs reflect the latest advances in technology and AI, but we never lose sight of the human element. Technology should support human decision-making, not replace it. We prepare our students to use modern tools confidently while keeping empathy at the center of everything they do.

▲ What are your key priorities for your first year as Academic Director?

My main priority for this first year is ensuring that our education remains deeply meaningful, practical, and life-changing, especially as César Ritz Colleges is proudly recognized and certified by the Swiss federal government as a University of Applied Sciences.

That commitment to academic excellence starts with evolving our curriculum so that it reflects the latest AI trends and modern business shifts. At the same time, I want to emphasize supporting the whole student, making sure every individual feels fully backed to grow personally, academically, and professionally. We will focus on expanding our global network by deepening our connections with our incredible alumni. And finally, we will build strong partnerships with forward-thinking businesses and leading higher education institutions – within Switzerland and across the globe.

What trends do you believe will have the biggest impact on hospitality and business education over the next five years?

The biggest shift is finding the balance between advanced technology and human touch. AI and automation are changing how businesses run, but consequently the need for empathetic, inclusive leaders has never been higher. The leaders who succeed in the coming years will be those who can use high-tech tools to make informed decisions, while relying on human soft skills to build trust and community.

What advice would you give to recent graduates starting their careers?

Remember that leadership is about service and empathy. Tools and technologies will change throughout your career, but your ability to listen, adapt, communicate, and care for people will always be your greatest strength. Stay curious, keep learning, and view your work as a way to positively impact those around you.

What excites you most about your new role?

I love watching our students grow into confident leaders who are ready to make a real difference. Knowing that the education we offer here will shape students' lives, support their families, and ripple out into their communities is what makes this work so fulfilling.

Is there a message you would like to share with César Ritz Colleges alumni around the world?

To all our alumni: you are the proof of what a César Ritz education can do. Your achievements in workplaces and communities around the world inspire us every day. As we move forward, I invite you to stay close to our community — share your journey, mentor our current students, and visit us whenever you can. You will always have a home here.





Riad Abi Haidar, CEO of Hospitality Division, One United Properties Leadership in Hospitality

▲ From César Ritz Colleges to today

My journey from César Ritz Colleges to my current role as CEO of the Hospitality Division at One United Properties in Romania has been shaped by passion, perseverance, and purpose. César Ritz was where my vision truly took form — the place where hospitality became more than a profession, but a lifelong calling. The values I absorbed there continue to guide every decision I make today, whether leading teams, shaping brands, or building destinations.

▲ Lessons that stayed with me

What César Ritz gave me goes far beyond textbooks. They taught me humility, discipline, respect for people, and pride in service. I learned that true leadership starts on the floor, not in the boardroom — and that excellence is achieved through consistency, care, and integrity. These lessons remain at the heart of my leadership style.



▲ Romania's hospitality potential

Romania excites me because it reminds me of possibility. The country is a market full of authenticity, culture, and untold stories waiting to be shared with the world. Being part of this moment — helping elevate Romanian hospitality to international standards — is both a professional privilege and a personal mission.

▲ Our philosophy at One United Properties

What sets our approach apart is emotion. We do not simply develop hotels — we create places that people feel connected to. Every project is designed to tell a story, to bring together architecture, service, gastronomy, and community. Hospitality, for me, has always been about creating memories, not just assets.

▲ Skills future leaders truly need

Today's hospitality leaders must lead with empathy. Technical skills matter, but what truly defines success is emotional intelligence, adaptability, cultural awareness, and the ability to inspire people. Hospitality will always be a people business — and the heart will always matter.

Advice to César Ritz Colleges students

To current students, my advice is simple: stay curious, stay grounded, and never rush the journey. Every role, every challenge, every setback will shape you. Trust the process, believe in yourself, and remember that leadership is earned through actions, not titles.

Pride in being an alumnus

I am incredibly proud to be a César Ritz Colleges alumnus. The name itself stands for excellence, global perspective, and timeless hospitality values. Wherever my career has taken me around the world, being a César Ritz graduate has always been a mark of credibility and respect.

Looking ahead

As I look to the future, my focus is on building a hospitality legacy in Romania – one that blends international standards with local soul. I hope that my journey can inspire the next generation of César Ritz students to dream boldly and lead with heart.



A CHEF WITHOUT BORDERS: Alexandre's International Culinary Journey



I am Alexandre Morado, a Portuguese chef raised in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and my culinary journey has taken me across continents and into some of the world's most celebrated kitchens. As Traveling Chef Ambassador for the Swiss Education Group, I share my passion for gastronomy by connecting with chefs, students, and culinary communities around the world.

I hold a Bachelor of International Business in Culinary Arts from Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland. My career has included founding PRIVATO in the DRC, leading Bistro47 as head chef in Portugal, and refining my craft in Michelin-star restaurants such as Disfrutar, Osteria Francescana, The Yeatman, and Ocean. Today, my mission is to inspire future culinary professionals, share the value of perseverance and creativity, and help shape the next generation of chefs.

▲ If you could introduce one mindset to every aspiring chef, what would it be and why?

Staying curious and never believing that you've learned everything. The culinary world is constantly evolving, and every kitchen, culture, and person has something to teach you. Curiosity keeps you humble, pushes you to grow, and helps you see opportunities where others only see obstacles.

What inspired you to pursue a career in the culinary arts, and why did you choose Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland for your studies?

I've always been fascinated by how food brings people together and tells the story of a place and its people. I wanted a career that allowed me to be creative while continuously learning. I chose Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland because of its international approach to culinary education and the opportunity to build a strong technical foundation while gaining exposure to diverse cuisines and perspectives. What really stood out to me was that the program went beyond cooking techniques by providing valuable insight into the operational, financial, and business aspects of the culinary industry, giving me a more complete understanding of what it takes to succeed in culinary/hospitality. CAAS gave me the confidence to pursue opportunities beyond my home country.



Can you share a particularly memorable project, event, or culinary experience from your travels?

One of the most memorable aspects of my travels has been learning directly from local cooks and artisans rather than only from professional kitchens. Watching someone prepare a dish that has been passed down through generations reminds you that food is about history, family, and identity as much as technique. That said, one experience stands out above all others. In 2018, I completed my first internship at Disfrutar in Barcelona. It was one of the most demanding yet rewarding learning experiences of my career.

The long hours never felt like a burden because every day was an opportunity to pursue perfection, develop an extraordinary attention to detail, and learn something new through every dish we created.

Most importantly, I realized that what truly inspired me wasn't just cooking, but also creating memorable experiences and genuine happiness for every guest. That experience reaffirmed my passion for the industry and motivated me to continue building my career. Those experiences, from learning in local communities to working in world-class kitchens, have shaped my cooking far more than any recipe ever could.



What role do you believe chefs play in promoting cultural understanding and connection?

Chefs are storytellers. Every dish reflects traditions, history, geography, and the people behind it. When we prepare another culture's food with respect and a willingness to learn, we help people appreciate differences rather than fear them. Food has a unique ability to start conversations and create connections that transcend language and borders.

What has been your biggest professional challenge, and what did it teach you?

Working in different countries and adapting to new kitchens, cultures, and expectations has been both the biggest challenge and the greatest reward. Every environment required me to earn trust, communicate effectively, and remain adaptable. It taught me that resilience, humility, and a positive attitude are just as important as technical ability.

In an industry that is becoming increasingly global, what skills do you think future hospitality professionals should develop beyond technical expertise?

Communication, cultural awareness, adaptability, and emotional intelligence have always been essential skills – and are now more than ever! Technical knowledge will always matter, but the ability to work with diverse teams, understand different perspectives, and build meaningful relationships is what truly sets professionals apart in today's hospitality industry.





Can you share a moment during your travels that fundamentally changed your perspective on food or people?

One realization is that some of the best meals I've had weren't served in famous restaurants but in people's homes or small local establishments. Great food isn't defined by luxury or complexity, but by care, generosity, and authenticity. These experiences changed how I think about both cooking and culinary/hospitality.

What is one common misconception people have about international cuisines that you've observed through your travels?

A common misconception is that every cuisine has one 'authentic' version. In reality, food constantly evolves through migration, local ingredients, and regional traditions. What is considered authentic in one village may be completely different just a few minutes away. Authenticity is often much more diverse than people expect.

What advice would you give current Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland students who dream of building a global culinary career?

Be open to opportunities that take you outside your comfort zone. Travel whenever you can, ask questions, and learn from everyone you meet, whether they are Michelin-star chefs or home cooks. Build strong fundamentals, stay humble, and remember that your attitude will open as many doors as your skills. A global culinary career isn't just about seeing the world, but also understanding people through food.





MEET LROY LIM

Culinary Arts Academy Alumnus

Leading with Passion

Lroy Lim is a proud graduate of Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland's class of 2015. He currently works as a fine dining General Manager in Malaysia, overseeing multiple F&B outlets such as The Farm, Ignis, and Chan Rak BBQ.

What made you choose Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland over other culinary schools?

What stood out to me about Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland was that the program wasn't only focused on technical cooking skills, but also covered management and business, which gave me a much broader understanding of the industry compared to schools that focus only on the kitchen.

How did your CAAS experience shape your leadership style today?

During my studies, I was exposed to many different ways of working and handling situations. Those experiences taught me to stay open-minded and adaptable, which is extremely important in an industry that is constantly evolving.

Which skills or experiences from your studies became most valuable in real-world operations? Did the school's internships help you land your first role?

For me, the most valuable part was definitely the internship opportunities. Being able to intern in Michelin-star restaurants gave me real-world experience very early on and opened many doors for my career.



Can you walk us through your journey from culinary student to General Manager?

Like most people in this industry, I started as an intern and worked my way up through the kitchen to eventually become a Head Chef. Over time, I became more interested in understanding the business side of operations and seeing the bigger picture. That's what motivated me to transition into management.

What were some of the biggest challenges of moving from kitchen roles into management?

One of the biggest challenges was learning how to operate restaurants efficiently while still maintaining the standards expected from each outlet. Today, I spend my days visiting restaurants, checking on operations and teams, and planning future programs together with departments like marketing, HR, and finance to keep all the brands growing and relevant.



How do you balance operational efficiency with high dining standards?

I believe success comes from having a lean and capable team instead of a large but inefficient one. Consistency also starts with having the right people you can trust leading each outlet, while staying connected through regular spot checks and open communication with the team.

What advice would you give someone considering culinary school today?

My advice is to truly understand the industry before entering it. Hospitality and F&B can be incredibly rewarding, but also demanding, so this is not for everyone. Try working in a busy restaurant first and see if you genuinely enjoy the environment.

Beyond cooking, communication skills are extremely important today. Chefs can no longer stay hidden in the kitchen...being able to present yourself, speak confidently, and connect with people really matters.

How important has networking been in your career growth?

Networking has played a huge role in my career growth. Having the right connections can open many opportunities, not just in hospitality but in life in general.

At the end of the day, success in this industry is not just about food, but also leadership, adaptability, and people.



MEET LAKINDU:



Inspiring the Next Generation of Pastry Chefs

▲ Tell us about your journey from studying at Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland to becoming an Assistant Lecturer in Patisserie at Colombo Academy of Hospitality Management in Sri Lanka

My journey started at the Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland, where I completed my Swiss Grand Diploma in Pastry and Chocolate Arts. Studying in Switzerland exposed me to high international standards, discipline, and precision in pastry. After my studies, I had the opportunity to gain industry exposure across different countries. I worked and trained in Switzerland, then moved to Belgium, where I experienced a strong chocolate and pastry culture, and later to the United States, where I worked in a high-volume professional kitchen. Each destination shaped my understanding of different work environments, production styles, and professional expectations.

When I returned to Sri Lanka, I was offered the role of Assistant Lecturer in Patisserie at CAHM. While teaching is not my long-term goal, I saw it as a valuable opportunity at a young age to develop leadership, communication, and management skills while contributing to the next generation of pastry professionals.

What inspired you to move from industry into teaching, and what do you enjoy most about working with students?

The move into teaching was more of a strategic decision than a permanent career shift. I wanted to continue growing professionally, and the role offered me early exposure to responsibility, planning, and management. What I enjoy most is seeing students progress from being unsure beginners to confident young chefs. Guiding them through techniques and watching them succeed in practical assessments and competitions is very rewarding.

How has your education at Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland influenced your approach to patisserie and culinary education today?

My education in Switzerland had a major influence on my professional mindset. CAAS emphasized precision, organization, and consistency, which are fundamental in pastry. The international environment also taught me adaptability and professionalism, which I now try to pass on to my students. I encourage them to aim for global standards while staying proud of their local identity and ingredients.



What skills or lessons from your studies do you pass on most often to your students?

The lessons I emphasize are:

- Discipline and time management
- Clean and organized work habits
- Precision in technique and measurement
- Respect for ingredients and minimizing waste
- Understanding fundamentals before focusing on creativity

These are the foundations that help students succeed in any professional kitchen around the world.

What does a typical day look like for you as an Assistant Lecturer in Patisserie?

A typical day involves planning practical sessions, preparing ingredients, and guiding students step by step through recipes and techniques. I monitor their progress, correct mistakes, and ensure they follow professional standards. Outside of class, I spend time developing training materials, planning workshops, and working on personal pastry projects and competitions.



How do you see the future of patisserie evolving, particularly in an academic or training environment?

The future of patisserie will focus more on sustainability, health-conscious products, and the use of local ingredients. Zero-waste techniques and environmentally responsible production will become essential skills. Training institutions will also need to prepare students for real industry conditions, with more emphasis on efficiency, adaptability, and innovation.



▲ What has been one of the most rewarding moments in your teaching career so far?

One of the most rewarding moments has been seeing students represent Sri Lanka on international platforms and achieve recognition. Watching their growth from the classroom to the global stage is extremely fulfilling.

▲ What makes you most proud to be an alumnus of Culinary Arts Academy Switzerland?

I am proud to be part of an institution that upholds strong international standards and provides global exposure. My time there gave me the technical skills, discipline, and confidence to work in different countries and professional environments.

▲ Finally, what are your aspirations for the next stage of your career?

My long-term goal is to return fully to the pastry and chocolate industry and continue building my own brand, KŌ. The vision behind KŌ is to create high-quality pastry and bean-to-bar chocolate that highlights Sri Lankan ingredients while meeting international standards. I hope to gain more international exposure, refine my craft, and eventually establish KŌ as a respected brand known for quality, sustainability, and strong craftsmanship. The aim is not just to produce chocolate and pastries, but to build something that represents Sri Lanka on a global level.

FROM SHMS TO THE ROCKIES: Alexandra Charlton's Journey with Vail Resorts



Alexandra Charlton is an SHMS alumna and Assistant Community Association Manager with Vail Resorts in Keystone, Colorado. Originally from Indonesia, she began her career through Marriott's Voyager Program at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center in Denver (US), where she developed a strong foundation in hospitality operations, leadership, and guest service. Today, she applies those skills to community and resort management, combining her passion for people, problem-solving, and relationship-building to support residential communities in a dynamic mountain resort environment. Alexandra enjoys the collaborative nature of resort life and is always eager to embrace new challenges and opportunities for growth.

▲ Could you tell us a little about your career journey since graduating from SHMS?

After graduating, I joined Marriott's Voyager Program in Front Office Operations at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center. The program provided an excellent foundation for my career and allowed me to develop both professionally and personally. I grew in confidence and adaptability while gaining valuable exposure to hospitality operations, leadership, and guest service.

What attracted you to your current role as Assistant Community Association Manager at Vail Resorts?

As I was completing the Voyager Program, I began exploring new career opportunities. While I enjoyed working in front office operations, I realized I was looking for a role that offered a more structured schedule while still allowing me to interact with people and solve problems on a daily basis. I knew I didn't want a traditional desk job, but I was ready for a different challenge.

A former colleague who had worked in a similar property management role at Vail Resorts encouraged me to apply, believing my hospitality background would translate well to the position. Although I had no prior experience in property management — my internships and work experience had all been within hotels and resorts — I was excited by the opportunity to learn a new side of the industry and expand my skill set.

What does a typical day in your role look like?

During the busy seasons, when the resort is operating in the winter and for a few weeks during the summer, no two days are the same. I typically start my day by reviewing emails and prioritizing tasks, but plans can change quickly. Unexpected issues often arise, whether a water leak, an equipment malfunction, or another maintenance concern that requires immediate attention.

The off-season has a greater focus on preventive maintenance and property improvements. A large part of my role involves coordinating with contractors and vendors, scheduling inspections, managing work orders, and ensuring that maintenance projects are completed efficiently. This proactive work helps prepare the property for the following busy season and keeps everything running smoothly year-round.

Looking back, what experiences or skills learned at SHMS have been most valuable in your career?

Working with classmates from diverse backgrounds on group projects helped me develop strong communication and interpersonal skills. My experiences in the Student Ambassador Forum (SAF) during BA2 and BA4, as well as participating in the UNWTO Student's League in BA3, taught me how to prioritize tasks, manage multiple responsibilities, and perform under pressure. These experiences, combined with my internships, prepared me well for the fast-paced and people-focused nature of my career.





What do you enjoy most about working in property management?

One of the things I enjoy most is the strong sense of community. People are generally friendly, collaborative, and willing to help one another. Homeowners, contractors, and my coworkers alike all share a commitment to solving problems and keeping things running smoothly. I think being part of a resort community contributes to that positive and supportive environment.

What qualities do you believe are essential for someone wanting to build a successful career in this field?

The ability to stay calm under pressure is essential. When issues arise, often not just one but several problems compete for priority at once. Being adaptable, resourceful, and able to think on your feet allows you to maintain a positive attitude while responding effectively to find solutions.

What advice would you give students who are interested in pursuing careers beyond traditional hotel operations?

Don't be afraid to take a chance on opportunities that fall outside of your comfort zone. Apply for roles even if you don't meet every qualification — you may be more prepared than you think. Also, seek out mentors and ask questions. Throughout my career, I've found that many people are willing to share their knowledge and help you grow if you're willing to learn.

What are your professional goals for the next few years?

I enjoy what I'm doing right now, so I'm focused on continuing to learn and grow within the property management industry.

What has been your most memorable career moment so far?

One of my most memorable career moments was during my first few months at the Gaylord Rockies. The hotel was oversold, and I had to inform a guest that we no longer had a room available for them. I was incredibly nervous — it was my first time to deal with a situation like that. Looking back, this was a defining moment because I learned to stay calm under pressure, communicate with empathy, and focus on finding a solution even in difficult circumstances. The experience gave me confidence in my ability to handle challenging situations and helped shape the way I approach guest and homeowner interactions today.

Another memorable career moment came in realizing that I could successfully transition from hospitality operations into property management. When I joined Vail Resorts, I had no prior experience in the field, so I had a steep learning curve. Being able to adapt, build new relationships, and develop expertise in an entirely different area of the industry gave me a great sense of accomplishment. I realized that many of the skills I learned in hospitality — communication, problem-solving, and customer service — are transferable and valuable in a variety of careers.



What does hospitality mean to you?

Growing up in Indonesia, hospitality has always meant making people feel welcome and cared for. Hospitality is deeply rooted in our culture, where generosity, warmth, and respect for others are part of everyday life. Whether welcoming guests into our homes or helping someone feel comfortable in a new environment, hospitality is about creating genuine human connections. I bring that perspective to my work by focusing on building relationships, anticipating needs, and ensuring that people feel valued and supported.

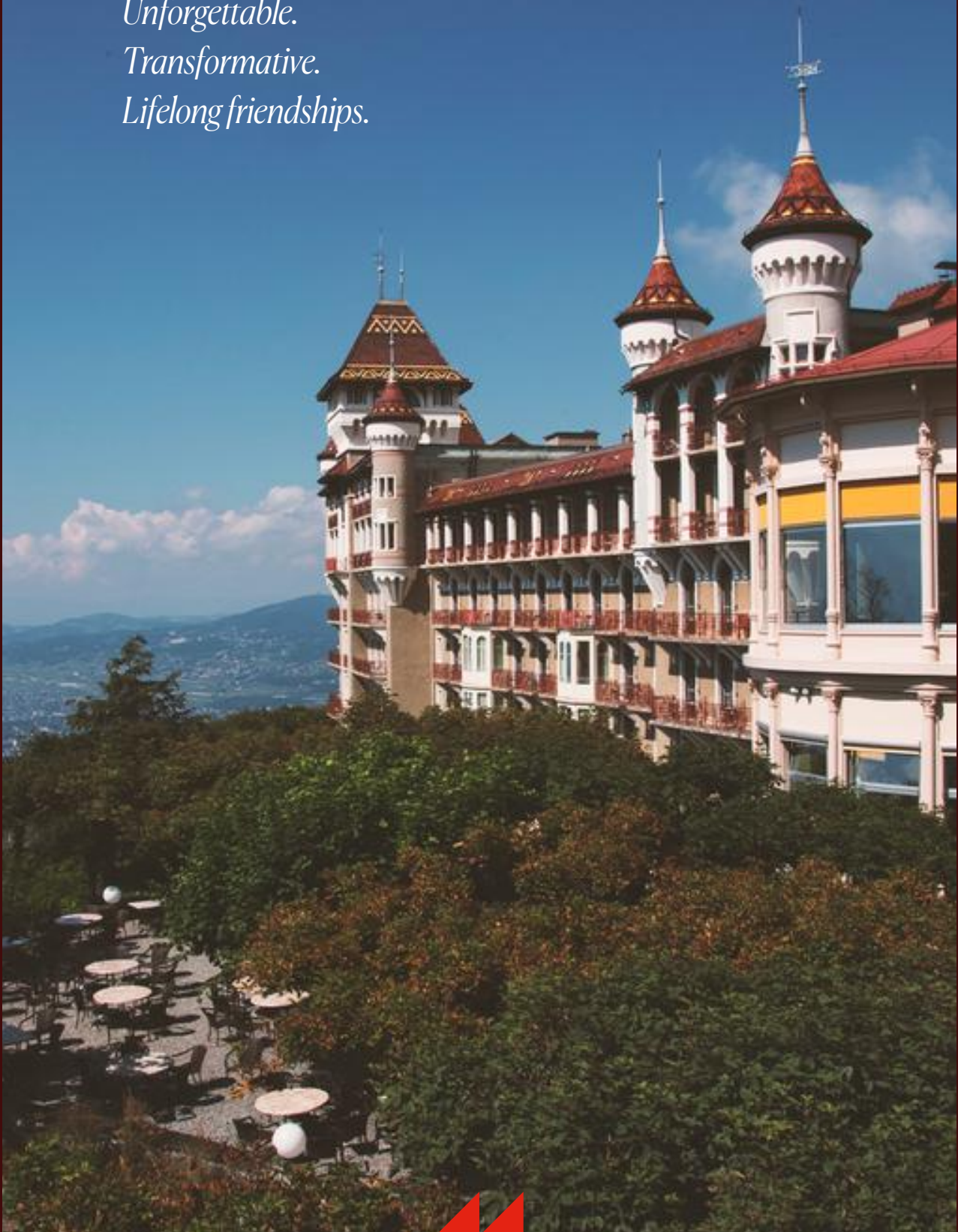


Three words or phrases that best describe your SHMS experience.

Unforgettable.

Transformative.

Lifelong friendships.





FROM IHTTI TO VIETNAM

Erik's Journey to Production Manager at Glass Egg

▲ Could you share your journey from IHTTI to becoming a Production Manager at Glass Egg?

I started my career in hospitality, graduating in Hospitality & Design Management from IHTTI and being selected for the Marriott Voyage leadership program after graduation. I then worked as the Guest Services Manager at the Sheraton Saigon Hotel before COVID significantly disrupted the industry.

During the 2021 lockdown, I reassessed my long-term direction and recognized that my core strengths – project management, people coordination, and business management – were highly transferable from what I'd learned in college and from previous customer service experiences that went beyond hospitality.

I then sought opportunities in project management in the IT/Technology-related sector, and made a career transition joining Glass Egg as a Junior Art Producer. Over the past four years, I've progressed to Production Manager, leading different discipline teams and delivering complex game art productions in a global, fast-paced environment with a people-focused, data-driven, and results-oriented approach.

▲ What drew you to the gaming industry specifically?

Honestly, gaming has been a massive part of my life since elementary school. I started playing Pokemon on my Game Boy when I was five. But as I grew up, games became more than just a way to blow off steam – they were the bridge that connected me to the people I cared about, like my dad and my close friends. I've played just about everything, from RTS games like Age of Mythology and Warcraft 3 to more action-packed shooter games like Half-Life and CrossFire to racing games like Need For Speed and later on Dota 1, League of Legends, and FIFA.

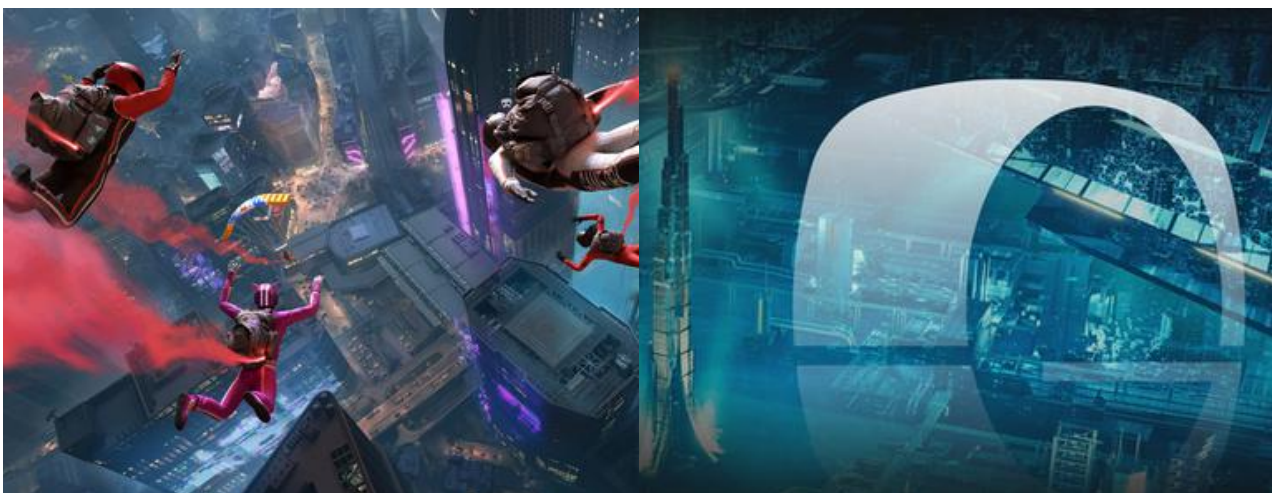
When I was analyzing my next move during the pandemic, I did some research and was genuinely surprised to see that business revenues of the gaming industry were four times higher than music and film combined during the 2020 – 2021 period. That data point was the clincher. Even though moving from hospitality to game art production surprised a lot of my friends and former colleagues, it wasn't a crazy pivot to me, but rather a natural step into an industry I had been part of for 20 years by that point.

▲ Many assume IHTTI focused exclusively on hotels. How did your hospitality education support your move into gaming?

I think that is the biggest misconception about my hospitality management degree. People hear 'hospitality' and think strictly about hotels and restaurants.

In reality, my program was split. The first two years covered hotel operations and service, but the final two years were essentially a detailed business school curriculum – finance, marketing, human resources, leadership, and entrepreneurship. This gave me a full toolkit for general business management, not just hotels.

But the real 'hidden weapon' I took from that IHTTI education – and what I think sets hospitality graduates apart – are two specific mindsets that I still keep and use every day in my career. First, leading with a focus on people, and second, treating every interaction with a customer service mindset. Whether I'm dealing with game art assets, hotel guests, or co-workers, the need to understand and serve the client or the people around me remains exactly the same. Those principles translate directly into game production where success depends on cross-functional collaboration, stakeholder alignment, and consistently delivering quality outcomes for clients and passionate gamers.





▲ What experiences or courses from your studies do you feel most directly prepared you for managing production at a Virtuos Studio?

Looking back, I really took four specific courses to heart. At the time, they seemed like standard schoolwork, but they actually became the foundation that allowed me to pivot from a manager in hospitality to a producer in the game development and art production industry.

My project management course taught me how to break down complex workloads, manage timelines, resources, priorities, and budget, and how to use practical tools like Gantt charts, work breakdown structures, and S.M.A.R.T goal setting. These skills turned out to be universal, regardless of industry.

The second course was finance and accounting. Figures can be dry and boring, but understanding terms like revenue and sales, gross margin, net earnings, fixed vs. variable costs, and EBITDA is what separates a regular employee from a true manager. This course gave me the 'business' knowledge to understand how a production studio actually makes money.

The third course was marketing management. Learning the market research and competitor analysis processes, 4Ps model, SWOT analysis, and value propositions isn't just about advertising and selling products; it's about understanding your market and your competition. I learned how to analyze business potentials — which is exactly how I spot new business opportunities when working with my clients and other stakeholders in my current industry.

Finally, leadership courses helped me understand different leadership styles and, more importantly, understand myself as a leader. That foundation taught me how to adapt my approach based on people and situations, which is critical in any career path.

▲ What does a typical day look like for you now, and what do you find most rewarding about your work?

A typical day for me is about overseeing the whole production, balancing people and performance across my production department, and aligning our production with the studio's business vision and targets. I oversee multiple art production teams across different disciplines, making sure each project stays on track in terms of quality, timelines, and client expectations. I work closely with my producers and leadership teams to prioritize resources, remove bottlenecks, and improve workflows, while keeping a close eye on production key metrics like operational efficiency, team efficiency, and project health as well as financial KPIs such as billables, revenues, and gross margin.

What I find most rewarding is seeing the full journey come together — from months or years of hard production work to the moment a game finally launches worldwide with millions of gamers playing our product. Seeing my team's names in the credits and their excitement when their work comes to life is incredibly fulfilling.

But honestly, the core feeling is exactly the same as when I worked in hotels. It's seeing the joy on people's faces, whether a satisfied guest or my team chilling and laughing together around our PS5 and Xbox at the gaming corners in the studio after a long day — that human connection is the real reward.

And hitting our quarterly and annual KPIs is pretty satisfying too, of course!

What are some of the most exciting or challenging projects you've worked on recently?

I've had the privilege of managing art production for some renowned titles like Apex Legends, Marvel's Spider-Man 2, and Concord.

Most recently, I worked on Mafia: The Old Country, which is an action-adventure AAA title released in August 2025. It was a massive undertaking, as I managed a team of over 100 people across multiple disciplines for the environment production of this game.

What excites me most about these projects is seeing how large teams come together to deliver a cohesive experience, proving that successful game development is as much about teamwork and execution as it is about creativity.

And I can't wait until you see the next AAA titles that our Glass Egg production teams are cooking. They will be released this year.

Beyond gaming, what skills do you think are vital for the broader global labor market right now?

If recent years have taught us anything, it's that the global workforce is evolving faster than ever – from the COVID disruption to block chain adoption, and now an increasingly AI-augmented work environment. We're already seeing how automation and AI are reshaping roles and forcing companies and individuals to rethink how they create value.

From my limited perspective, three things will keep you indispensable for any organization:

- Higher adaptability: I transitioned from hotels & restaurants to game development. So you must be willing to unlearn and relearn constantly and stay up-to-date with the latest trends and technologies, regardless of your chosen industry. The job you learn and train for today might look completely different in five years.
- Better AI fluency: Don't fear it; master it. Learn to use AI as a tool to speed up and be more productive at your work, but don't let it replace your critical thinking and analytical skills.
- Stronger emotional intelligence (EQ): This is where your hospitality training and people-oriented mindset shines. AI can generate data, but it cannot create, empathize, negotiate, or lead with a people-focused mindset. Human connection, emotion, and creativity are the few things technology cannot replicate.

Looking back, what is one piece of advice you would give to current students who want to build a non-traditional career path like yours?

Have faith in your own personal compass, even when your path doesn't look conventional to others. Building a non-traditional career requires resilience – having thicker skin, staying grounded during uncertainty, and not letting outside opinions define your direction.

Define your core values and value propositions, know exactly what you bring to the table. Set a clear vision for who you want to be in five or 10 years, both personally and professionally. That way, even when you are traveling through 'misty roads' or forced to change directions – like I did during the pandemic – your final destination and objectives remain clear. Your path may change, but your targets shouldn't.



MEET NATALIYA DADIVIERINA

Leading Quality Excellence at Hotel Bristol, a Luxury Collection Hotel in Warsaw



Originally from Kyiv, Ukraine, and currently based in Warsaw, Poland, Nataliia Dadivierina is a luxury hospitality quality leader with over seven years of international experience across Poland, Switzerland, and Ukraine. Her background combines operational leadership in food & beverage and front office with expertise in quality strategy, pre-openings, task forces, and cross-audits at The Ritz-Carlton, Vienna; Luxury Collection properties in Vienna; Prince de Galles, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Paris; and many other Luxury Collection hotels across the EMEA region, as well as luxury service transformation.

Since 2023, Nataliia has regularly served as Manager on Duty as part of the weekend executive leadership rotation, strengthening her ability to lead complex hotel operations, support teams, and ensure exceptional guest experiences in real time. She has played a key role in advancing luxury quality standards in Poland, including leading the country's first Forbes Travel Guide and LQA partnership within Marriott International. She also served for three years as a member of the Marriott International EMEA Quality Assurance Advisory Board, contributing to regional quality discussions, brand alignment, and continuous improvement initiatives.

A graduate of the Swiss Hotel Management School and a guest lecturer within Swiss Education Group institutions, Nataliia is recognized for building high-performance service cultures, leading complex quality transformations, and positioning properties for global recognition through innovation, precision, and uncompromising luxury service standards.





How did SHMS prepared you for luxury hospitality leadership?

SHMS was a true center of excellence that shaped not only my academic foundation, but also the way I think as a hospitality leader. It gave me a strong understanding of luxury hospitality as a business — where guest experience, financial awareness, operational discipline, and leadership culture must work together.

What made SHMS especially valuable was the balance between theory and real industry practice. We worked on events, restaurant concepts, financial forecasts, P&L thinking, and business cases that reflected the realities of hotel operations. At the same time, we were constantly encouraged to develop confidence, communication skills, resilience, and leadership through teamwork and simulations.

Returning to SHMS later as an F&B Supervisor Intern gave me an even deeper perspective. I was no longer only learning from the environment — I was contributing to it and supporting the development of future hospitality professionals. That experience reinforced my ability to operate in a structured, high-performance, and international environment. SHMS taught me to think beyond tasks and departments. It taught me to understand the hotel as a living business ecosystem, where every decision impacts the guest, the team, and the overall performance. That mindset became the foundation of my career in luxury hospitality and quality leadership.

What were your key steps to becoming Head of Quality?

My path into quality leadership was built on strong operational experience across front office and food & beverage. Those departments gave me direct exposure to the guest journey, team dynamics, brand standards, and the moments where luxury service either becomes memorable or breaks down. Over time, I became increasingly interested in the connection between operations, guest expectations, audit performance, and long-term reputation. Quality leadership is not only about identifying gaps, but rather translating standards into daily behaviors, aligning departments, coaching teams, and helping the hotel perform at a consistently higher level.

A defining part of my journey was working with internationally recognized quality frameworks such as Marriott standards, Forbes Travel Guide, and LQA. I also had the opportunity to lead Poland's first Forbes Travel Guide and LQA partnership, which was an important milestone in positioning luxury quality standards at a more global level. Serving for three years on the Marriott International EMEA Quality Assurance Advisory Board also broadened my perspective, allowing me to contribute to regional quality discussions, understand different markets, and see how standards can be adapted while still protecting brand consistency.

For me, quality leaders must be connectors. We connect guest expectations with operational execution, brand standards with team culture, and data with meaningful action. In many ways, the role requires thinking like an auditor, acting like an operator, and leading like a coach.



What are the skills and qualities essential in quality management?

Success in quality management requires a combination of operational expertise, strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and influence. A quality leader must understand the details of service delivery, but also see the wider business picture — how guest experience affects reputation, loyalty, team performance, and financial results.

Analytical thinking is essential. We need to understand guest feedback, audit results, trends, loyalty data, and operational gaps, then translate them into practical action plans. But analysis alone is not enough. Quality improves only when teams understand the purpose behind the standards and feel empowered to deliver them. That is why communication and coaching are critical. Quality cannot be imposed only through checklists. It has to be embedded into culture through leadership, consistency, and daily reinforcement. The best quality professionals are both precise and people-oriented. They can notice the smallest detail, but they also understand that true luxury is delivered by motivated, confident, and emotionally intelligent teams.



What is your typical day in the office?

No two days are ever the same, which is what makes the role so dynamic. My day often begins with an executive briefing with the leadership team, where we review operational performance, financial indicators, guest feedback, quality priorities, and opportunities to create memorable guest experiences. This alignment is essential because quality is not a separate department — it is connected to every part of the hotel.

Throughout the day, I prioritize staying visible across the property. Regular walk-throughs, conversations with associates, and guest interactions help me understand what is happening on the ground and where support is needed. Leadership visibility is very important in hospitality because teams need to feel that standards are not only monitored, but lived by leaders.

A significant part of my role involves working with department heads on audits, action plans, training, quality initiatives, and continuous improvement. I also maintain close alignment with the General Manager and regional teams to ensure that our strategy supports both brand expectations and the property's positioning.

Another key focus is the pre-arrival journey. Luxury service begins before the guest enters the hotel. Anticipating preferences, preparing personalized touches, and aligning departments around guest needs are essential parts of creating a seamless experience.

As Manager on Duty, I also step into broader operational leadership, especially during weekends. This requires quick decision-making, calm communication, and the ability to support both guests and teams in real time. Ultimately, my role is about balancing operational excellence, strategic quality management, and genuine hospitality.

How do you define quality in luxury hospitality?

For me, quality in a luxury hotel goes far beyond facilities, checklists, or compliance with standards. These are the foundation, but they do not define true luxury on their own. True quality is the ability to deliver consistency while making every guest feel personally recognized. It is about anticipating needs, understanding emotions, and creating moments that feel effortless, thoughtful, and sincere.

Luxury guests may not always remember every operational detail, but they will remember how the hotel made them feel. They remember whether the team understood them, whether the experience felt personal, and whether the service created a sense of belonging. The highest level of quality is achieved when operational precision and emotional intelligence come together. That is when service becomes hospitality, and hospitality becomes a lasting memory. Ultimately, quality is not only what we deliver, but rather what guests feel, remember, and share with others.



Describe your systems and standards for consistency.

Consistency in luxury hospitality requires both strong systems and strong culture. At Marriott, we rely on global brand standards, guest feedback platforms, loyalty insights, operational audits, and structured action plans to monitor performance and identify opportunities for improvement. Internationally recognized standards such as LQA and Forbes Travel Guide add another important layer. LQA helps refine operational execution through detailed assessments, mystery audits, and structured debriefings. Forbes Travel Guide brings a strong focus on emotional engagement, personalization, and the human side of luxury service.

However, systems only create impact when they are translated into daily behaviors. My role is to connect these frameworks with the reality of hotel operations — making sure that standards are understood, action plans are followed, and teams see quality as part of their everyday mindset. The goal is not to create service that feels scripted. The goal is to create consistency that still feels personal, natural, and emotionally intelligent.

What are the trends shaping quality standards today?

One of the strongest trends shaping quality in luxury hospitality is the move from transactional service to deeply personalized and emotionally engaging experiences. Guests today expect more than flawless execution. They want authenticity, individuality, and a strong sense of connection. Wellness, sustainability, digital convenience, and immersive local experiences are becoming central to the luxury journey. Guests increasingly value hotels that understand their lifestyle, respect their time, and create experiences that feel meaningful rather than generic.

Another important trend is the smarter use of data. Loyalty insights, guest preferences, and feedback platforms allow hotels to anticipate needs more precisely. But the human element remains essential. Technology can support personalization, but it cannot replace empathy, intuition, and genuine care. The future of quality will belong to hotels that can combine operational excellence, emotional intelligence, responsible luxury, and innovation without losing the human touch.



How do you incorporate sustainability and digitalization into your quality strategy?

Sustainability and digitalization are now integral parts of quality strategy in luxury hospitality. Sustainability is no longer a separate initiative, but a core expectation of modern luxury guests. Responsible luxury means operating thoughtfully, reducing unnecessary waste, supporting more conscious choices, and doing so without compromising comfort, elegance, or personalization.

Digitalization, meanwhile, helps us understand guests better and operate more efficiently. Data, loyalty platforms, integrated systems, and digital tools allow us to anticipate preferences, improve communication, and create a more seamless journey. Balance is key. Technology should enhance the human experience, not replace it. Sustainability should feel intelligent and authentic, not forced. In luxury hospitality, both digitalization and sustainability must support the same goal: creating experiences that are responsible, personal, and emotionally meaningful.

What differentiates a good hotel from an exceptional one?

A good hotel delivers comfort, consistency, and reliable service. An exceptional hotel creates emotion, memory, and trust. The difference lies in anticipation, personalization, and culture. Exceptional hotels understand guests beyond their explicit requests. They notice details, remember preferences, and create moments that feel sincere and individual. But exceptional hospitality is not created by standards alone, but by people. When teams are empowered, engaged, and proud of what they do, guests feel it immediately. Culture becomes visible in every interaction. For me, an exceptional hotel is one where operational excellence and emotional consistency work together. The guest experience feels effortless because alignment, discipline, leadership, and genuine care are behind the scene.

What keeps you motivated?

What motivates me most is the impact hospitality can have on people – both guests and teams. For guests, we have the opportunity to transform an ordinary stay into a meaningful memory. Sometimes it is a small gesture, a thoughtful detail, or a moment of genuine care that stays with them long after they leave. For teams, I am motivated by the opportunity to coach, inspire, and help people grow. Seeing associates become more confident, more engaged, and more aware of the impact they create is one of the most rewarding parts of leadership.

I am also inspired by the constant evolution of luxury hospitality. Standards are becoming more sophisticated, guests are becoming more individual, and the industry continues to challenge us to learn, adapt, and innovate. What keeps me passionate is the possibility to raise standards, develop people, and contribute to a form of hospitality that is both excellent and deeply human.





Which achievement in your quality journey are you the most proud of?

One of the achievements I am most proud of is leading Poland's first Forbes Travel Guide and LQA partnership within Marriott International. This important milestone allowed us to bring internationally recognized luxury quality frameworks into the local market in a very structured and meaningful way. For me, this was not only about preparing for assessments or meeting standards, but rather about creating a deeper understanding of luxury service across teams — helping people see how emotional engagement, personalization, attention to detail, and operational consistency all work together.

The process required strong cross-departmental collaboration, training, alignment with leadership, and continuous follow-up. The experience strengthened my belief that quality transformation is never achieved by one person alone, but rather when the entire team understands the vision and feels ownership of the guest experience. This achievement is especially meaningful to me because it connected international luxury standards with local execution and helped position the property for a higher level of global recognition.

What advice would you give to future SHMS students who want to become hospitality leaders?

My advice would be to stay curious, humble, and ambitious at the same time. Hospitality leadership is built through experience, and every role teaches something valuable — from operations and guest interaction to finance, strategy, and team leadership.

I would encourage students to see hospitality not only as service, but as a complex global business where people, emotions, data, culture, and performance are all connected. The earlier you understand that bigger picture, the faster you will grow as a leader.

Developing resilience is important. Hospitality is dynamic, demanding, and sometimes unpredictable. But hospitality is also one of the most rewarding industries because you can see the impact of your work every day — in guests, in teams, and in the reputation of the hotel. SHMS gives students a strong foundation, but what you do with that foundation depends on your mindset. Be proactive, take responsibility, learn from every department, and never lose the human touch. In the end, hospitality is about people — and great leaders are those who make both guests and teams feel valued.



MEET VERONICA BESHKOVA:



Leading Operations at Qantas Lounges by Accor

I come from a family who have been in the hospitality industry for generations. Hospitality and management have always come very naturally to me as I have grown up in a family of hotel entrepreneurs who own multiple four- and five-star hotels in Bulgaria.

I have become a very competitive person and building my own success is very important to me. At a young age, I already knew that I wanted to follow the steps of my father, who has successfully led the family hotels for years. Where best to study hospitality and develop practical skills than in Switzerland, a country recognized for its discipline and strong reputation for service excellence?

I started my SEG journey at the top of the Alps at the SHMS Leysin campus, where I earned a Swiss Higher Diploma in Hospitality and Events Management. Next I moved to HIM in Montreux to continue my education, where I received a BBA (Honors) in Hospitality and Business Management.

I had a passion for luxury, so I felt that I needed to better understand the luxury customer to be able to hone my skills and stand out from the competition. I enjoyed my time in Switzerland and believe that I received the best possible education, which gave me a great foundation for my future growth as a hospitality leader.

My educational journey didn't stop in Switzerland, as I then moved to the little Principality of Monaco, where I completed a two-year master's degree in Management of Luxury Goods & Services. While perusing these degrees, I held various internships in leading hospitality organizations such as Hilton and Marriott, and I volunteered throughout my studies for various charity events for UNICEF and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund. Volunteering gave me a lot of practical experience and exposure and was a great foundation for the future.

After graduation, with the support of SEG, I managed to step into my first management role straight from university. I went to Beijing, China, to work as Club Lounge Manager for the prestigious Intercontinental Beijing Beichen Hotel. That was an experience I will never forget, 5,000 miles from home! Once you step into the world of hospitality, the journey never ends. International companies such as IHG offer global opportunities and after an exciting year in China, IHG offered me a placement back to Europe. However I decided to take a more exciting opportunity and became the Executive Team Leader at the Aloft Hotel (part of Marriott) in London, where I took part in a lot of innovative projects. I became SIX Sigma Yellow Belt in Hospitality Innovations and I took part in the first hotel- implemented Emoji Room Service Menu called TiGi, an innovation later implemented in all Aloft hotels worldwide.

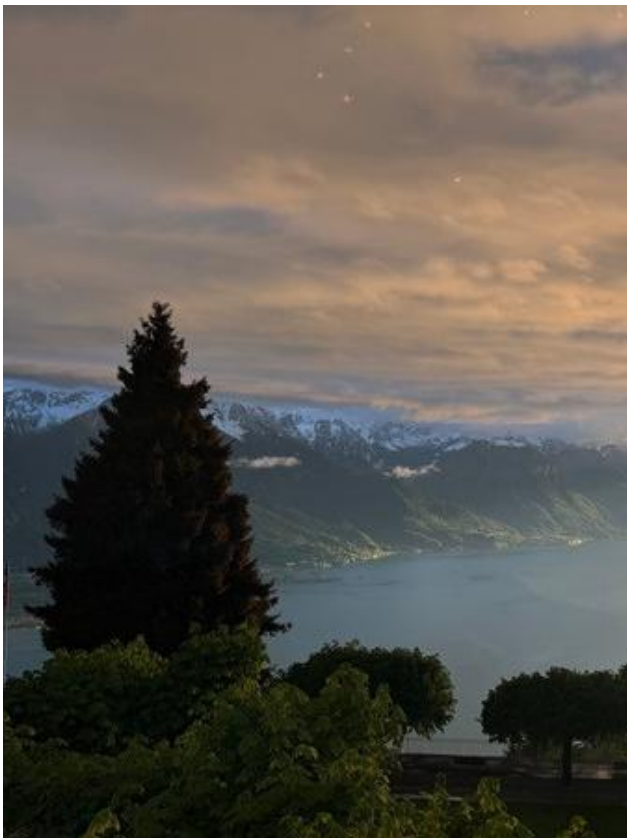


After Aloft, I took another interesting project, where I participated in the opening of the new 5-star Courthouse Hotel Shoreditch in London, where I worked as the Food & Beverage Operations Manager, and I took part in building concepts for the lobby bar, VIP Bar, rooftop bar, fine dining restaurant, meeting and events space, and luxury bowling alley. How satisfying to see the months of planning fall into place and the hotel becoming one of the luxury hot spots of east London. When the project came to an end, I was approached by the Hyatt Hotels and I now work there as Director of Food & Beverage at the Hyatt Place London Heathrow. This is my first time in an airport hotel and I am learning about aviation needs and long stay properties. Unfortunately, the franchise had some financial difficulties at the time and after two years of working for the company, a few of the other directors and I were made redundant.

Shortly after I started working as Deputy General Manager for a very exciting British boutique hotel group, LGH. I spent four years there, where I ran one of their flagship London hotels that was famous for weddings events. We hosted over 130 weddings a year, from small ceremonies for 20 to 30 guests to large weddings up to 1,500 people.

Three years ago, I connected with another inspiring leader and SEG alumnus who is the Regional General Manager for Accor Hotels in Australia and currently my boss. I am Operations Manager for Qantas Lounges by Accor at Heathrow, where I started my aviation hospitality journey. I look after the most valued Business and First Class customers for Qantas, the Australian national airline. I enjoy Qantas, and working for an airline has showed me that the world has no borders, as I get the opportunity to work internationally in Singapore and throughout Australia.

Working in the hospitality industry has given me the opportunity to travel around the world and to share my knowledge and experience. One of the things I love the most is to grow a team around me and to see them succeed. A career in hospitality is challenging but also very rewarding. I will never forget SEG, where the journey started, and I will always acknowledge everyone who helped me on the way. Our SEG journey doesn't end with graduation, and the amazing alumni network has played such an important role for my career success. Thank you for everything you do!



How did your experience at Hotel Institute Montreux shape your approach to leadership in hospitality operations?

A strong foundation is essential for lasting success, growth, and resilience in a hospitality career. My time in HIM was very transformative, providing me with a solid foundation in hospitality studies and opening doors to some of the best global hospitality companies. The school taught me discipline, the importance of consistency and high standards prepared me to excel and stand out in the competitive and demanding industry. The incredibly supportive culture of HIM taught me a core principle: ensure that the employees' experience mirrors the desired guests' experience. When staff feel valued and comfortable, they extend that care to the guests.

How do you maintain consistent service quality across high-traffic, time-sensitive lounge environments?

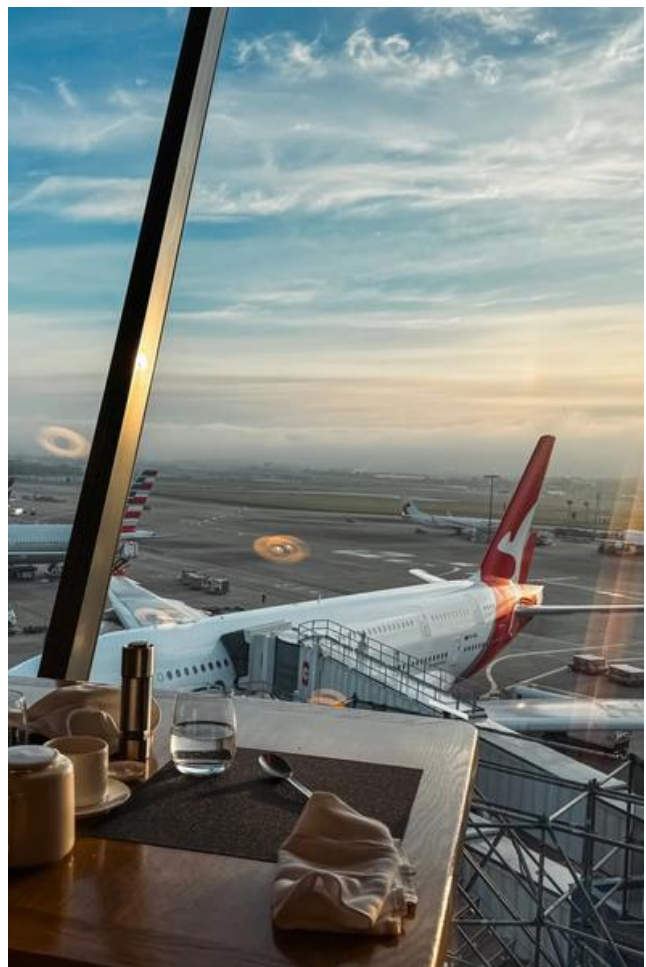
Aviation is very fast-paced and constantly changing. Maintaining consistent service quality requires a combination of immaculate planning and contingency forecasting – ‘always have a plan B.’ Cross-training employees to handle multiple roles and to understand the operations is a key. Simple high-quality menus, proactive table management, and clear communication help build a resilient team that thrives under pressure.

What defines a “premium experience” in a Qantas lounge today?

No matter on which corner of the globe you are, the moment you step into a Qantas lounge as a passenger, you experience the exceptional Australian hospitality. Our lounges pride themselves with superior quality, extreme personalization, and anticipation of customers’ needs. Last week a couple was traveling on their honeymoon, and our lounge teams made their honeymoon unforgettable on three continents and every stop of their journey from London to Sydney. Our team members not only know our passengers’ names, but they also know ours as well: we offer high-value emotional connection rather than just luxury branding.

How do you motivate and manage teams working irregular hours in an airport setting?

Key strategies include building a culture of empathy, where we prioritize recognition, by helping employees understand how their unique contributions makes a difference to the overall company goal. I prioritize flexibility, trust, and proactive communication. The team knows that it is alright to make mistakes, but we need to learn from them and not repeat them in the future.



▲ What are the most common operational challenges in airline lounges, and how do you address them?

Flight disruption is probably the biggest challenge for airline lounges, and they can change the whole work dynamic with the blink of an eye. One small delay can cause severe overcrowding, which makes it difficult to manage high service standards with limited space. To manage capacities and effectively handle delays, we rely on detailed capacity management plans, effective teamwork, transparent communication, and great partnership with other airline lounges, where we can redirect an overflow of passengers to even out the demand.

▲ How do you balance efficiency with personalization in a fast-paced environment?

I strongly believe in empowerment. I give staff the autonomy to act quickly and resolve issues without unnecessary escalation, allowing them to bring warmth and empathy to the conversation. Efficient training and clear service standards create confidence, which is key to balancing efficiency with personalization in a fast-paced airport luxury setting.

▲ How is the role of airline lounges evolving in the broader travel and hospitality ecosystem?

More and more airlines are partnering with luxury hotel companies, and Qantas is not an exception, with its two-decade long partnership with Accor Hotels. The aim is to recreate the five-star experience in the lounge setting and to maintain this through the entire journey. Qantas lounges are evolving from quiet exclusive waiting areas into a premium 'destination experience,' focusing on Michelin-star quality dining, wellness, and sustainability.





▲ What trends do you see shaping premium travel experiences over the next five to 10 years?

The airline industry is constantly evolving, and it becomes increasingly harder to predict the upcoming trends. However, I strongly believe that hyper-personalization will continue to evolve and shape the future of luxury travel with allowing travelers to personalize every aspect of their journey. In Qantas, we will proudly introduce 'Project Sunrise' in the coming year, the first extra long-haul flight to connect Sydney to London without a stopover. The flight is so long (20+ hours) that our passengers and crew will be able to see the sun rise twice during a single journey.

▲ What qualities distinguish candidates who succeed in high-level operations roles?

A strong foundation is important for lasting success, therefore an elite education is the starting point. Developing a blend of strategic thinking and high emotional intelligence is important. The airline industry is unpredictable and requires leaders who 'thrive in chaos' and can make quick decisions with incomplete information. The important thing is to bring clarity while leading the team with empathy.





MEET MERT BASARAN

Building a Finance Career at Kempinski Palace Engelberg and Frutt Mountain Resort

My journey in hospitality took an unexpected but rewarding turn to finance. After earning a degree in hospitality management with a specialization in finance from HIM Business School, I began my career in hotel accounting and have spent the past three years growing within two Swiss properties. Today, I serve as a Cluster Senior Accountant, supporting financial operations while staying connected to the industry I'm passionate about. Looking back, HIM gave me more than an education — it provided the foundation, confidence, and versatility to build a career that blends hospitality with finance.

How did your studies at HIM Business School prepare you for a career in accounting within the hospitality industry?

My studies provided a strong blend of hospitality management fundamentals and business-oriented thinking, which is essential for accounting in this industry. Beyond technical knowledge, the HIM program emphasized understanding how each department's decisions and processes contribute to overall financial performance. This comprehensive perspective allows me to interpret financial data not just as numbers, but as reflections of operational realities — whether occupancy trends, cost control in F&B, or seasonal fluctuations.

Likewise, HIM's international environment shaped by students from a wide range of nationalities strengthened my adaptability, communication skills, and cross-cultural understanding — qualities that are increasingly important when working across diverse teams.

What drew you specifically to finance rather than operational roles in hotels?

While I enjoyed the dynamic nature of hotel operations, I was particularly drawn to the decision-making side of the business. Sitting at the core of strategic planning, finance is where operational performance is translated into insights that guide the future of the property. Analyzing performance, identifying inefficiencies, and contributing to improving profitability is very rewarding. Moreover, accounting allows me to stay closely connected to operations while working on a more analytical and strategic level.

Looking back, which courses or experiences were most relevant to your current position?

Courses on principles of accounting, financial and managerial accounting, statistics, and strategic planning were particularly valuable, as they built the technical foundation I rely on daily. Equally important were the various practical projects within the financial analysis and wealth management specialization as well as the mandatory internships where I had the opportunity to apply theory in real hospitality settings.

What does a typical day look like for you as an accountant at Kempinski Palace Engelberg and Frutt Mountain Resort?

A typical day involves a mix of routine financial tasks and analytical work. I review daily revenue reports, reconcile accounts, and ensure that financial records are accurate and compliant. I also work on monthly closings, internal control procedures, and compliance assessments. Collaboration is a key part of my role, as I regularly communicate with department heads to clarify figures and provide financial insights. No two days are exactly the same, especially in a seasonal business, which keeps the role engaging.



How closely do you collaborate with operational departments like front office or F&B?

Very closely. Accounting in hospitality is highly interconnected with operations. I regularly liaise with the front office team regarding room revenue, billing discrepancies, and occupancy data; and with F&B teams on cost control, inventory, and revenue tracking. This collaboration ensures financial accuracy while also helping operational teams better understand their performance and identify areas for improvement.



Which soft skills have proven essential in your role?

Communication is crucial – I often need to explain financial concepts to non-financial colleagues in a clear and practical way. Attention to detail is equally important, as accuracy is fundamental in accounting. Additionally, problem-solving skills and a proactive mindset help me identify discrepancies and improve processes. Finally, adaptability is key in hospitality, where business levels and priorities can shift quickly.

What advice would you give to students interested in combining hospitality with finance?

I would encourage students to build a strong foundation in both areas – understand the operational side of hospitality while developing solid financial skills. Gaining practical experience through internships is essential, as it helps connect theory to real-world applications. It is also important to stay curious and develop a mindset that looks beyond numbers to understand the story behind them. Combining hospitality with finance opens up diverse career opportunities, so being flexible and proactive in exploring different paths can be highly beneficial.



Where Are Our Alumni Today?

Our latest alumni survey highlights the remarkable diversity of career paths across the Swiss Education Group community. While hospitality remains at the heart of our alumni network, graduates are building careers across a wide range of industries, from culinary arts and food & beverage to business, consulting, education, sales, and entrepreneurship.



F&B, culinary, and chef roles remain the strongest career pathway, representing 38% of alumni. At the same time, 19% have gone on to build their own ventures, highlighting the entrepreneurial spirit of our culinary graduates.



HIM alumni demonstrate the breadth of a business education. Hotels remain the leading sector, while graduates are also pursuing careers in food & beverage, finance, consulting, IT, and entrepreneurship, with 15% running their own ventures.



Hospitality continues to be the dominant career destination, with hotels leading the way, followed by food & beverage and education/public sectors. The data also highlight the growing entrepreneurial journey of alumni as their careers progress.



Hotels remain the strongest sector for CRCS graduates, while alumni are also making their mark in sales and marketing, consulting, and entrepreneurship. The diversity of career paths demonstrates how a foundation in hospitality can open doors well beyond traditional hotel roles.



One SEG community, many career journeys

Across all four schools, the message is clear: our alumni are not following one career path — they are creating their own.

From Michelin-star kitchens and luxury hotels to consulting, technology, education, sales, marketing, and entrepreneurship, SEG graduates are taking the knowledge, skills, and mindset gained during their studies and applying them across industries around the world.



▀ *Hospitality may be where many journeys begin — but it certainly isn't where they have to end.*





Alumni Reunions Around the World

One of the greatest strengths of the SEG alumni community is the lasting connections that extend far beyond graduation. Throughout the year, alumni from across the globe came together to reconnect, share experiences, and celebrate the friendships and professional networks that began during their time on campus.

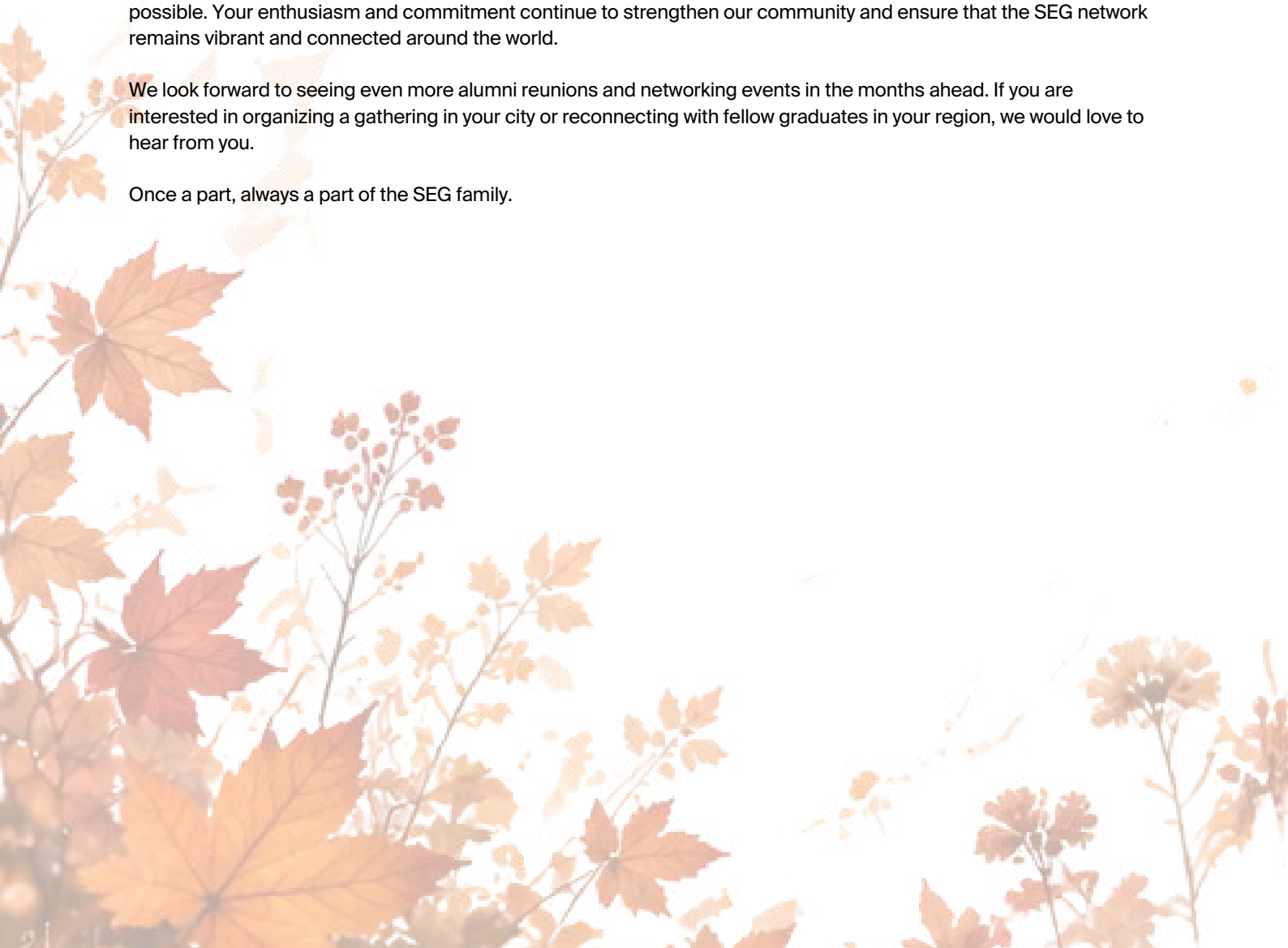
From intimate gatherings to larger networking events, these reunions provide a wonderful opportunity for graduates from different generations and programs to come together and strengthen the bonds that unite the SEG family. Whether meeting in major cities across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, or closer to home in Switzerland, alumni embrace the chance to reconnect with former classmates, exchange career insights, and welcome new members into the community.

The photos featured on these pages capture more than just reunions — they reflect the spirit of a truly global network built on shared experiences, lifelong friendships, and a passion for hospitality and leadership. Seeing alumni supporting one another, celebrating professional achievements, and continuing to build meaningful relationships across borders and industries is truly inspirational.

We would like to thank all alumni volunteers, ambassadors, and attendees who helped make these gatherings possible. Your enthusiasm and commitment continue to strengthen our community and ensure that the SEG network remains vibrant and connected around the world.

We look forward to seeing even more alumni reunions and networking events in the months ahead. If you are interested in organizing a gathering in your city or reconnecting with fellow graduates in your region, we would love to hear from you.

Once a part, always a part of the SEG family.



Thailand



Cyprus



Indonesia



SWISS EDUCATION GROUP INDONESIA MINI GATHERING
17.04.2026
Framed by Rhytme



SWISS EDUCATION GROUP INDONESIA MINI GATHERING
17.04.2026
Framed by Rhytme



SWISS EDUCATION GROUP INDONESIA MINI GATHERING
17.04.2026
Framed by Rhytme



SWISS EDUCATION GROUP INDONESIA MINI GATHERING
17.04.2026

Malaysia



Singapore



Vietnam





Alumni Making Waves with Inicio Foundation

Our alumni are always up to exciting things, but what's happening through the Inicio Foundation is something really special. Since launching in 2024, the foundation has been helping graduates turn their ideas into real, impactful projects around the world. And the results so far? Pretty inspiring.

Among the standout initiatives, a few projects really capture the spirit of what Inicio is all about.

First up is the Zero Waste Pastry Lab in Sri Lanka, a brilliant example of how creativity in the kitchen can also be sustainable. This project is all about reducing food waste in pastry operations – proving that even small changes in how we work can make a big difference for the planet.

Then there's the Africa Dyslexia Organization in Ghana, which is tackling an often-overlooked challenge in education. By raising awareness and supporting students with dyslexia, the initiative is helping create more inclusive learning environments and opening doors for young people who might otherwise be left behind.

And finally, the Swiss Hospitality Excellence Empowerment Program (SHEEP) in Rwanda is giving hospitality professionals the tools and training they need to grow. Yes, this is about improving service standards, but equally important is building participants' confidence, careers, and long-term opportunities.

Behind these projects are some incredible alumni who are putting their passion into action. Lakindu (Shevantha) Welikala, Rosalin Abigail Kyere-Nartey, and Babu Kannan are just a few of the changemakers leading the way. They're joined by a wider network of graduates from all over the world, each bringing their own ideas and energy to the table. What's really great to see is how quickly this community is growing – and how much impact they are already having. With funding already supporting multiple projects, Inicio is proving that when alumni come together with a shared purpose, amazing things can happen.

We can't wait to see what's next.



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