



# Gerrit Gräf

## From Blueprints to Legacy

The hum of construction, the dust of foundations, the anticipation of opening day — this is where Gerrit Gräf's story truly began. Leading his very first pre-opening, he watched a bare site rise into a vibrant luxury hotel. Building a team from scratch and welcoming the first guest was more than a milestone; it was a revelation. He realized that great hotels are not just built with stone and glass, but with culture, vision, and people.

"Hospitality is about the transformation of spaces, teams, and experiences. That first pre-opening taught me the power of culture and collaboration," he reflects. That experience became the compass for a career spanning over 25 years, 14 hotel openings, and leadership roles across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

## Leading at Scale, Delivering in Detail

Today, as Multi-Property General Manager of JW Marriott Marquis Dubai and Dubai Marriott Harbour Hotel & Suites, Gerrit navigates the challenges of two very different properties. One, one of the world's tallest hotels with over 1,600 rooms; the other, an intimate all-suite property designed for personalized experiences.

"Scale is never an excuse to overlook detail," he says. For him, luxury is delivered one guest at a time, and every leader must act as an owner of the guest journey. Training, technology, and a culture of accountability ensure that every associate feels responsible for the "little big things" that make a stay unforgettable.

## Corporate Strategy Meets Property-Level Magic

Gerrit's experience extends beyond hotels to corporate leadership roles, including Area Vice President at Marriott International. These positions taught him how strategic decisions influence multiple markets, brands, and owner groups. Yet, he finds the property level where the "magic happens."

"At the property level, you see a guest's smile or an associate's growth firsthand. Both perspectives are valuable, but property leadership keeps you grounded in why we do what we do," he explains.



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JW Marriott Marquis Dubai and  
Dubai Marriott Harbour Hotel & Suites

## Innovation and Sustainability as Core Values

For Gerrit, modern luxury is inseparable from innovation and responsibility. At JW Marriott Marquis, digital enhancements streamline guest convenience, while eco-friendly initiatives such as energy optimization, LED retrofits, food waste reduction, and water conservation have become operational standards. At Marriott Harbour, sustainability initiatives resonate strongly with long-stay guests who value eco-conscious living.

He emphasizes that these efforts are part of a larger, global framework: “Marriott International has been driving sustainability and social impact through its Serve 360 platform for many years, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This framework guides everything from carbon reduction to community engagement across the group’s portfolio.”

## People First, Always

Gerrit’s leadership philosophy is simple but profound: “Take care of your people, and they will take care of your guests.” What began as a passion for cultures and people has evolved into a mission to create environments where associates thrive and guests feel genuinely cared for.

Having led teams across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, he values humility and empathy. “When you honor cultural differences, you build stronger, more engaged teams,” he says. Collaboration is central to his approach; Gerrit believes the best ideas often come from those closest to the guest.

## Redefining Luxury for the Next Decade

Luxury, Gerrit observes, is shifting from being product-led to experience-led. “Tomorrow’s luxury traveler values authenticity, personalization, and emotional connection more than thread count. Guests want meaning and memory, not just material.” This evolving definition guides every decision he makes, from service delivery to operational strategy.

## Life Beyond Hospitality

Away from the boardroom and hotel corridors, Gerrit recharges through travel, cooking, and exploring Dubai’s culinary scene with his family. These personal passions allow him to return to work with renewed energy, reminding him that hospitality is ultimately about human connection and shared experiences.

## Advice to the Next Generation

To aspiring hoteliers, Gerrit offers timeless guidance: “Be curious, be resilient, and never underestimate the value of hands-on experience. Take roles that challenge you, learn from every culture you work in, and build strong networks along the way. Celebrate the small wins, trust the journey, and let passion guide you forward.”

From his first pre-opening to leading two of Dubai’s most iconic hotels, Gerrit Gräf has proven that true luxury is not about scale, but about people, purpose, and experiences. His career is a blueprint for building not just hotels, but lasting legacies.

