

Joyce Yun

*General Manager,
Hotel Zephyr Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco*

The Hotel Zephyr, located in Fisherman's Wharf, is a unique and award-winning property in San Francisco, part of the Curator Hotel & Resort Collection. Curator is a distinct collection of over 100 independent hotels and resorts, founded by Pebblebrook Hotel Trust and a group of other industry-leading hotel operators.

With over two decades of experience spanning continents, **Joyce Yun** has established herself as a leading voice in the hospitality industry. Her career began at international brands in China, such as Hotel Sofitel and InterContinental, which gave her a **strong foundation in classic hospitality and structured operations**. This rich experience prepared her for her current role as Hotel General Manager at the Hotel Zephyr Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, where she has not only witnessed the industry's evolution but has also played a key role in shaping its future. Her journey is a masterclass in adapting to change, blending diverse cultural values, and leading with empathy.

In this exclusive interview, Joyce shares her profound insights on the most significant industry shifts, the nuances of international and union environments, and the core philosophies that drive her success.

From Rules to Relationships

Reflecting on her early career in China, Joyce recalls a rigid, highly structured environment where "standards" were non-negotiable and every action was precisely defined. "We weren't even allowed to speak to each other unless it was strictly work-related," she remembers.

Today, she notes a significant shift towards more **humanized and personalized leadership**. Leaders now balance high standards with empathy and flexibility, adapting their style to the unique culture of their team and hotel. Joyce has embraced this change, focusing on nurturing the potential of each team member. Her ability to lead with empathy comes from her own journey, having started on the front lines herself.

Navigating Union Environments and Cultural Nuances

After moving to the U.S., Joyce faced a new set of challenges: navigating a unionized workforce. Initially surprised by the clear and sometimes rigid division of labour, she quickly learned to appreciate the clarity that unions provide. She has found that union hotels are not difficult to run; in fact, they offer a framework of clearly defined roles and responsibilities.



Her strategy for success in these environments is rooted in transparency and respect. **By following the rules, understanding contracts, and working closely with HR**, she has learned that effective leadership is about collaboration, not confrontation. This mindset has been crucial to her growth, reinforcing her belief that every challenge is an opportunity for improvement.

The Power of Culture and Community

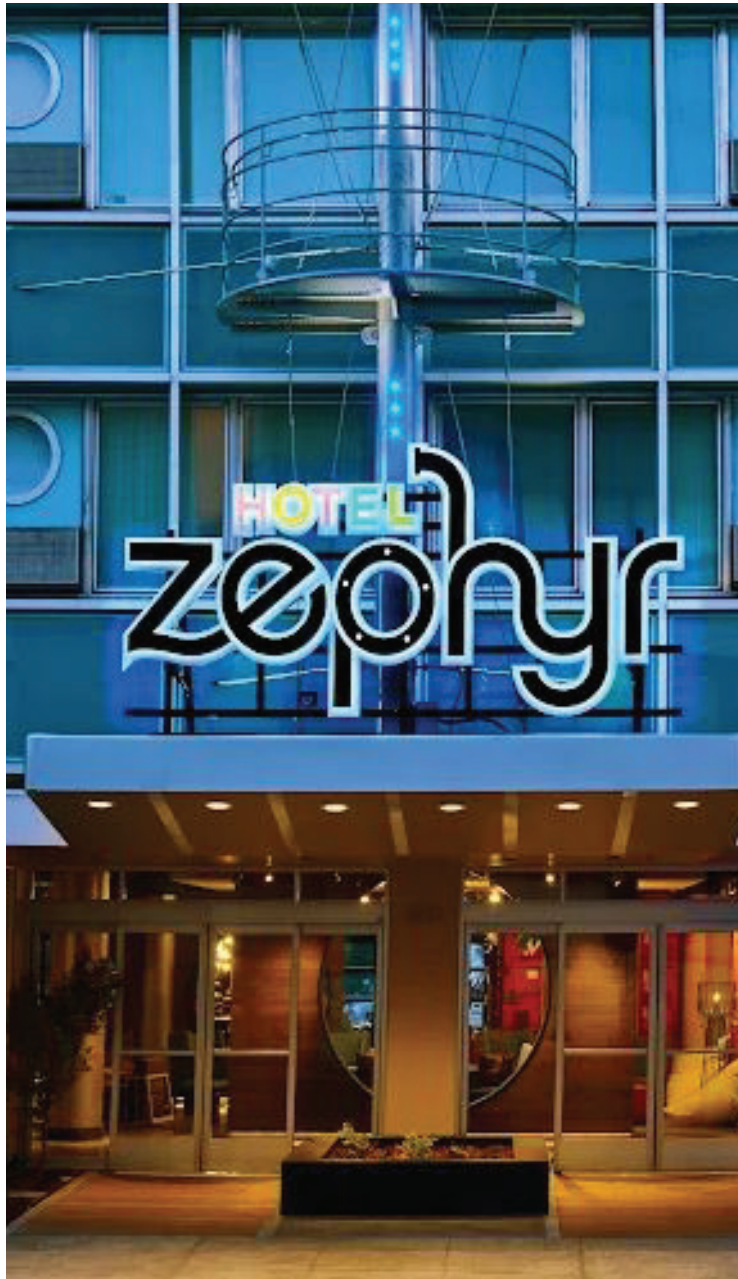
Joyce believes that building a strong team culture is deeply personal. Coming from a culture where hospitality is a way of life, she carries a natural instinct to host and care for others. She fosters trust by working alongside her team, listening to their concerns, and offering guidance grounded in her own front-line experience.

Her philosophy extends beyond the hotel walls. Joyce is a strong advocate for **community involvement**, serving on the boards of the Hotel Council of San Francisco and the Fisherman's Wharf CBD. For her, these roles are an extension of hospitality; they benefit the hotel by strengthening its local presence and building meaningful connections that uplift the entire team.

Lessons from a New Beginning and a Global Pandemic

Among the most memorable challenges of her career, Joyce cites two transformative experiences: her move from China to the U.S. at age 28 and leading her hotel through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Arriving in the U.S. with a limited English vocabulary taught her the power of humility and simple, inclusive communication. The pandemic, however, tested her resilience in new ways. Facing an almost-empty hotel, she focused on transparent communication, rigorous safety protocols, and cross-training her team. Both experiences forged her into a more **resilient, empathetic, and decisive leader**.



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opportunities in hospitality

The Blend of Technology and Human Connection

Looking ahead, Joyce believes that technology, including AI and automation, is poised to redefine the hotel industry by streamlining operations and personalizing the guest experience. Still, the post-COVID era has taught us a crucial lesson: human connection remains paramount. Guests crave the convenience of technology, but they also want to feel seen and valued. The winning strategy for hotels will be to find the right balance, using technology to optimize processes and allowing staff to concentrate on the genuine connections that build lasting loyalty.



Joyce leads with a balanced approach, combining disciplined, structured excellence with a personal touch. This unique blend allows her to maintain high standards while connecting authentically with her team and guests.

