



What Happens When a General Manager Becomes the Team's Biggest Cheerleader



JULIE RAMIREZ

General Manager
Embassy Suites by Hilton San Diego La Jolla

Welcome to another edition of our exclusive Trendsetters series, a platform dedicated to spotlighting hospitality leaders who are reshaping the industry's future. Our mission is to share the stories of trailblazers who are redefining leadership through innovation, culture, and purpose.

In this edition, we shine the spotlight on Julie Ramirez, General Manager of Embassy Suites by Hilton San Diego La Jolla. With more than 20 years of experience across New York, Chicago, and San Diego, Julie has built her career on resilience, adaptability, and heart. Recognized as a "GM to Watch" by Hotel Management Magazine and serving on the Board of Directors for the San Diego County Lodging Association, she is known for her authentic leadership, focus on empowerment, and commitment to culture. Julie continues to inspire both her teams and the wider industry, setting new standards for what modern hospitality leadership looks like.

A Career Built on Curiosity and Heart

Julie didn't plan on becoming a hotelier; it happened by chance when she was young. But what started as an unexpected entry into the industry quickly turned into a lifelong passion. She began in the rooms division, working behind the scenes, and gradually navigated nearly every department in the hotel. This hands-on approach gave her a deep appreciation for the intricacies of operations and taught her what it truly means to care for both a property and its people.

Her journey to becoming a General Manager has felt, in her own words, "both long and fast." Today, she thrives on creating meaningful moments for her team and guests, and can't imagine herself anywhere but in hospitality.

Adapting Across Cities and Cultures

Julie's career has taken her to **New York, Chicago, and San Diego**-three cities as different as they come. Each destination challenged her to adapt, test her creativity, and find new ways of leading. In New York, she mastered pace and precision; in Chicago, she found balance between structure and flexibility; and in San Diego, she embraced community and innovation.

Those experiences shaped her leadership philosophy: create a safe space for people to try, fail, and try again. It's a philosophy that not only empowers her team but also reflects her belief that adaptability is one of the greatest strengths a hospitality leader can cultivate.



Leading with Empathy from Day One

When Julie took over at Embassy Suites La Jolla, she made it clear that her role wasn't about hierarchy; it was about support. Instead of introducing herself as the new General Manager, she introduced herself as the team's cheerleader. She spent her first 90 days listening, learning, and building relationships with both her team and the hotel's ownership group.

Julie's message to her team was simple yet powerful. Her job is to make them successful, remove roadblocks, and support them. She challenges her people to think bigger, then steps aside to let them shine. That approach has set a tone of empowerment and trust that continues to thrive today.

Building a Culture of Empowerment

Working under Hilton's umbrella has been a point of pride for Julie, especially as Hilton has been named the #1 Best Place to Work for Women. At Embassy Suites La Jolla, inclusivity and empowerment aren't just buzzwords; they're daily practices. Julie can often be found folding towels alongside the housekeeping team, jumping behind the front desk on a busy Friday, or participating in safety demos in the kitchen.

The culture she has nurtured is one where every team member feels ownership in creating unforgettable guest experiences. From personalized amenities to handwritten notes, the focus is always on hospitality-first thinking. The result? A team that not only works harder but also works with heart.



A Voice for Hoteliers in San Diego

Beyond her hotel, Julie contributes to the broader hospitality community as a Board Member of the San Diego County Lodging Association. With rising operational costs among the biggest challenges facing hoteliers in the region, she lends her voice to discussions on how to remain resilient without compromising service. Her role allows her to collaborate with peers and policymakers, ensuring hotels across San Diego can adapt and thrive in a changing environment.

Wellness and Sustainability at the Forefront

For Julie, wellness isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. She ensures her team takes breaks, uses PTO, and has access to stress management resources. As she emphasizes, their teams can't deliver great service if they don't feel great themselves.

On the guest side, she embraces personalization through technology, eco-conscious choices, and thoughtful design. Sustainability is another key focus: her property eliminated single-use plastics by installing hydration stations, participates in beach clean-ups, and donates to organizations supporting veterans, foster children, and families in need.

Advice for the Next Generation

When speaking to young women entering the field, Julie is refreshingly candid. She encourages them not to let challenges overshadow the incredible opportunities hospitality offers. Her own career gave her the flexibility to raise her children, travel the world, and grow on her own terms.

"Be yourself," she advises. "Hospitality is about your personality and energy. But also, be driven, speak up, stay relentless, and remember that your individuality is what sets you apart."

Grounded, Balanced, and Looking Ahead

Outside of work, Julie finds balance in yoga, cooking, and time spent outdoors. Her meticulous organization keeps her focused, while her sense of humor keeps her grounded. Looking forward, she's excited about what's to come: "Hospitality is always evolving, and with San Diego as a year-round destination, the possibilities are endless."