



# Net Positive Hospitality Podcast transcript

From strategy to action: transforming communities through Net Positive

18<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**Music** 00:00

Music.

**Podcast voiceover** 00:10

Welcome to the Net Positive Hospitality podcast, brought to you by the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance.

**Kevin Carey** 00:17

Background audio from Summit: Welcome to San Antonio, we're delighted to have you here to join us. Glenn, thank you for your kind words. And also, I just wanted to echo and underscore the value that we see in this relationship....

**Podcast voiceover** 00:33

Alliance's Autumn Summit - 'Mainstreaming Net Positive Hospitality: From Strategy to Action' - was held in the United States in October, a first for the Alliance, reflecting its global outlook and reach. Partnering with the American Hotel and Lodging Association (the AHLA) and Questex, the event brought together the entire network of members and partners to engage in thoughtful discussions, reflect on achievements and map out action for the year ahead.

**Kevin Carey** 00:56

Background audio from Summit: About 30 minutes ago, there's just a huge onrush of activity...

**Podcast voiceover** 01:02

The Alliance was warmly welcomed to the event by Kevin Carey, interim CEO and President of the AHLA. We heard from Kevin on the future of AI and how the industry can make it work for them. The key focus of the summit was on reporting and compliance. We discussed metrics, target setting, optimisation and as an alliance, we asked: what does data best practice look like in 2025?

**Baptiste Carriere-Pradal (2B Policy)** 01:23

UK market authority considered this claim to be green washing, and ask and demanded that the campaign was taken...

**Podcast voiceover 01:29**

Addressing confusion in the industry around anti greenwashing e regulations. Baptiste Carriere-Pradal, Co-Founder and Director of 2B Policy analyzed exactly what sustainability truly means and how businesses must evaluate their messaging. A much anticipated white paper tackling food waste was discussed at the Summit. Erika Harms, Global Director of Sustainability at Iberostar Group and co chair of the Alliance's Supply Chain Optimization Impact Committee, discussed the magnitude of the issue.

**Erika Harms 01:59**

It's not an easy task for us to tackle the food systems, but I think this paper gives us that initial perspective of what it is and possible solutions and actions that are already on the way. So if we think about the challenges that we currently find in the provision and disposal of food, we see that costs...

**Podcast voiceover 02:25**

Attendees heard about the progress of the ground-breaking World Academy of Sustainable Hospitality, which offers training strategies that transcend international, regional and local boundaries. We discovered how the program has been designed to empower hotel professionals in driving true systems change towards Net Positive Hospitality.

**Glenn Mandziuk (the Alliance) 02:43**

What we heard years ago, a couple years ago, when we developed our five year strategy that training for our employees within the hotel companies was most paramount in helping us get to what we're talking about and really bringing this to life.

**Podcast voiceover 03:00**

The Alliance's work on the ground is a culmination of members and partners work and collaboration at events such as this, we're going to hear now about an initiative which is benefiting from such collaboration and the Alliance's employability program, and it involves a hotel room being built inside a prison.

**Host of training facility opening ceremony 03:15**

Honorable Mayor Joy Belmonte, ladies and gentlemen, join me in the countdown, in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 [audience clapping]...

**Podcast voiceover 03:26**

The ribbon cutting ceremony opening a training hotel room in a women's prison in Quezon City, a region just outside of the capital Manila in the Philippines, showcasing Net Positive in action here, a three month program has been launched to support the rehabilitation of women in the prison. Those on the program, also known as learners, are trained in hotel housekeeping. The project uses the Alliance's curriculum from its employability programs. Ann Olalo, General Manager of the Parkin by Radisson North EDSA, explains how the project came about.

**Ann Olalo (Radisson Hotel Group) 04:01**

This project in the Radisson we call it responsible business, you know, community, community outreach. So we do that year round. In November of last year, we donated over 400 pillows to the Quezon City Jail female dormitory. This was our first interaction with them. And in that facility, there are over 600 women. And these women, they're very young, they're pretty, most of them are and so when we were there, we were we were struck by how presentable they were. And then I asked the jail Warden, why are they here. He said, they're here because of drugs, you know, drug charges they either sell or they use it. When we were there and they were doing, they gave us a very nice welcome performance - they were dancing, they were singing - and so it struck me, and I said, you know, we should do more than just this one off donation. And so I said, we have the resources, we can teach them skills, and because this is a women's facility, I said that they could start with back of house. They can do housekeeping, and we can, as soon as they are released from prison, we can employ them as as casuals, as seasonals, you know, outsource labor. And so I pitched that to my boss, Deborah Haynes, the regional office in Singapore, and Inga from the corporate Brussels. She said 'Oh, is that the idea? Yes, we will introduce you to the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, because they have the curriculum'. And so that's how it started. And so, when we knew that we had the curriculum, because in our minds, you say 'Oh, we could do this on our own', but it's so nice to have the support of SHA. So what I did from December to April, we were trying to get an appointment with the mayor, because where we operate, it's one of the cities in Metro, Manila, Quezon City. And so I finally had a chance to speak to the mayor and pitch the idea. And because she's also a woman, and she's one of the best mayors in the Philippines, and so she said she was so on board with the idea. And she said 'Yes, let's do this'. And so from April down to this day, we worked with the Quezon City. They have a department that's called Gender and Development Council that oversees the women's prison. So we worked with a few [stakeholders]. We worked with their livelihood skills foundation. So there were a few stakeholders in this project, right? And so we worked with them to bring it to life. But the most important, also aspect of the project was I went to the owners, our owners, SM hotels, and said, 'Can we build an exact replica of the hotel room inside the prison?' and so. And then the owners were saying, where? Because you know exactly furnitures, fixtures, do it. And I said, you know, we have a spare and extra room, so the furnitures fixtures there we had. And so I had to get approval from the owners to donate it to the prison, SM hotels our owners. The President is a woman, the Executive Vice President is another - so we have women also in the senior leadership in our owning company. So I think it also resonated with them to support, you know, this long term project. So once I had the go signal, and then I asked the person to donate a space about 25 square meters, exactly like a hotel room. And so they said they found one for us. And then they said 'Go, let's recreate that hotel room'.

**Podcast voiceover 08:02**

The official opening of the hotel room inside the prison happened earlier this year. We heard from some of the women involved.

**Learner 1 08:09**

I joined the program to be equipped with skills when I gained freedom and to be able to touch lives. I know the hospitality industry is vast. I look forward to working abroad with the skills I have learned from this program.

**Learner 2 08:31**

I joined the program so that when I gain my freedom, I will have a future. I know this will be a start of a new beginning for me, especially with my family and children. This will give me the chance to regain myself confidence and realize I still have a new life to look forward to after this.

**Podcast voiceover 08:48**

The city mayoress Joy Belmonte spoke at the launch of the program.

**Joy Belmonte (Quezon City Mayoress) 08:51**

The goal is to see if the learners have truly applied the learnings in a positive way and have stayed away from wrongdoings and unlawful acts that could harm their lives. To all who participated, thank you so much. Your participation contributes to the development of our nation and our city [audience clapping]...

**Podcast voiceover 09:11**

Anne reflects on the first session and on how the Alliance's housekeeping curriculum is supporting the initiative.

**Ann Olalo (Radisson Hotel Group) 09:16**

If you could see them, they were so pretty, they were also made up, and they were all smiling. And that was when I opened the session. I said, you know, it's all about this. The message is really about hope for the future. There really is an opportunity for you. We they were all very excited and and this is going to run for three months every weekend. So there's a dedicated trainer, and using the SHA housekeeping curriculum, how amazing is that? 36 topics, 100 hours.

**Podcast voiceover 09:53**

Deborah Haines, Senior Director of Operations for Southeast Asia, for Radisson Hotels, spearheaded this initiative. Here She outlines the impact it is having and how important it is for the industry to give back.

**Deborah Haines (Radisson Hotel Group) 10:06**

I've worked for the Radisson Hotel Group for 24 years, so I started my life with them in Manchester. So when I was part of the Radisson Hotel Group, were always encouraged to give back to the local community. So when I met these ladies, they put on a show, they entertained us, they shared things with us, they showed us the skills that they'd learned through doing different hobby crafts and everything, and this was in November last year, so it was quite made quite an impression on me, and I shared openly with them that they had inspired me. And I think they were all quite surprised when I said

that we could just see that all we wanted to do was give people an opportunity at regular life again, and we have a recruitment issue in the hospitality industry, just like many, many organizations do. Where did everybody go during COVID? I don't know. This big hole took everybody from us. And why can't we teach some not basic skills? Because they're not but teach them skills to people to give them the confidence and the self belief, more than anything, that they can have a regular life again. So we came up with the housekeeping skills, and we brought the room to life, so an empty space became a fully fledged hotel bedroom, as I'm sure you've seen from the photographs, donated with support from the owning company of the hotel where Ann is, and we brought it to life and worked for the different NGOs everything to make sure curriculum was done correctly. And I think we had 42 ladies engage on the journey. So that's how it began, and it's taken nearly a year. We're giving people an opportunity and to get the mayor engaged of Quezon city was a phenomenal achievement by Ann, because now she wants us to look at working on two other places, drug rehabilitation, and unfortunately, there's quite a lot of child abuse in the Philippines, so to partner up with them as well, and look at how we can give and it's a lot of females. It's not just aimed at females, but there is a lot of females that need that self belief to be rebuilt for them. I started my career in house keeping, and now sat where I am. So I think that shows that this is available, and it gives people an opportunity to learn through practicality, because not everybody is exposed to a highly educational environment, and unfortunately, not a lot of people can afford that education when we go into some of these countries. So the fact that we as an international brand have always advocated in the 24 years that I've worked for the company to partner with the local communities, but different things turn us on differently. So I mean, for me to do recycling of plastic and things like that, it doesn't rock my boat, but when it's actually seeing something, whether it's the children, whether it's the adults, whoever it may be, but we're giving something back. And I think that's the most important thing, that you can bring a career, a future, to somebody, and they can carve it out however they want to, because we even do things like career month now, growth plans, all of this, showing people how they can go from being a waiter to become a General Manager one day. And you know, you've got many people out there that have got these aspirations that they just need that channel to be able to streamline it, funnel it, and for it to become reality for them. And we're looking forward to the first graduation. I mean, that's what you know, that's when we know that we have delivered what we want to. Everyone's not going to graduate. Imagine if they do, imagine the feeling if they do. But that first graduation, that's going to be such a special moment, and that will then give encouragement to other people as well, because that's what it's about. It's about giving that opportunity and showing that you can achieve it.

**Podcast voiceover 13:51**

Ann at Radisson has high hopes for the project, and the women participating

**Ann Olalo (Radisson Hotel Group) 13:56**

This project hopefully will allow them that opportunity to really, really reform, you know, for good.

**Podcast voiceover 14:06**

At the Alliance, we look to support the industry as it becomes net positive. In doing so, it's crucial that we hear from the youth of the industry. They are our future hospitality leaders in our new feature, voices

of the future. We hear from a woman who's embarking on her hospitality career and how she aims to drive sustainability in her work.

**Valentina Wießmeier (hospitality student) 14:29**

My name is Valentina Wießmeier. I'm from Germany, and I did my Bachelors at the Hotel Management School in Maastricht, and currently I'm doing my Masters in international business, and then specialized in Change Management. I entered the hospitality industry without really knowing that this would become my passion. However, during the time at the Hotel Management school, I realized that I really love to work and thrive in environment where I can help and excite people about their experience. In hotel, for example, and I had a lot of opportunities while studying to be involved in different extracurricular activities working with industry experts, and this really helped me to cement my commitment to progress my career in hospitality, and also underline the importance of mutual exchange and lifelong learning, which was super interesting to see how the people within hospitality are, yeah, supporting each other. And if you're a student who's really interested in the industry, you can always ask someone, and they're always willing to help people are still willing to help each other out. Me and a team, we participated in the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge, and we also went to the finals in Abu Dhabi, to the Future Hospitality Summit, where sustainability is also a big theme. And the challenge really brought into this attention that sustainability is really important in the industry. And wants to emphasize that the young people are really taking care of this new area in hospitality, and just emphasize that young people are coming up with new ideas to inspire the hospitality, how it's going now, but also to realize, like we as students need to realize as well, what's possible, what's not, because the experts know how things are going in hospitality. But I would say it's really important for me as well, and it was just really interesting to work on sustainability concepts and how this can be made feasible, and that also allowed us to talk to industry experts to see what's actually feasible. But I think there's a lot of things moving now, especially also looking at the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, how there's really a word going out, and hotels are being gathered together, also in different regions of the world. So over, I think it's really important as it's a big move right now as well.

**Valentina Wießmeier (hospitality student) 17:04**

I was working in Georgia, which is a very interesting area as well, also when it comes to sustainability, because a lot of new developments are coming up there. I mean, there are already a few hotels, but there are a lot of new constructions built there. So the potential to really integrate sustainability from the start, is very important, and I've been trying to connect different people and stakeholders so that we also integrated into companies where I was working in. But I would say it's really important to integrate sustainability there, because it will also help to ensure that the great culture of Georgia is being kept because it's such a strong culture. And it has also also been said that the more influence there is from other tourists, etc, as we see it in other countries, that it gets more fluid and like the values maybe like, flow a little around. So it's super important to collectively work together on integrating these practices. I would say it will take probably quite a few years from seeing how the hospitality is built up in general, it has been running like it is now for a lot of years. So it will take some time, of course, to integrate sustainability practices or do different trainings on how to really integrate your local communities. But I believe that there is such a strong move already, and I saw this as well, because I was really honored



to work with Noelle Homsy, which I also met through the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge, who is the Co-founder of Envi Lodges. And they really showed me of how they're trying to be sustainable, of how to be regenerative, how to really take care of the nature where they're building their eco lodges. So they gave a lot of nice insights into where hospitality and different companies are heading now. So I believe with collaboration, also considering different disciplines like we also need scientists, maybe who can help us to evaluate how, how these actions can be actually integrated. But I believe it will be an interesting journey as well for everyone. But if we all work together, I believe it's going to be possible. I'm very optimistic about that.

**Podcast voiceover** 19:44

Watch out for more voices from the future in our next episode.