

## Leading a New Era Podcast Episode 4: Diego Padula

**David:** Welcome back to Leading a New Era, the podcast from IHG that takes you behind the doors of the world's most iconic luxury hotels to uncover stories of growth, belonging and success. I'm your host, David Littlewood from the IHG Talent Acquisition Team.

**Eunice:** And I'm Eunice Clements-Tweedie VP Global Talent Acquisition and HR Business Partnering. Hello David, how are you?

**David:** I'm very well Eunice, how are you?

**Eunice:** I'm super good, thank you for asking.

**David:** I'm excited to speak to Diego today.

**Eunice:** Oh, me too. Have you seen where his beautiful hotel is?

**David:** I've seen the hotel. I've not been—not been to Honduras—but I'd love to go.

**Eunice:** We are so incredibly lucky in the work we do, just some of the locations are just astonishing. I've never met a GM who I hadn't want to go and visit on property. They're just extraordinary individuals.

**David:** In each episode, we catch up with a General Manager from IHG's Luxury and Lifestyle Portfolio to find out what it really takes to lead the fast-paced world of luxury hospitality, from pivotal career moments to curve balls that keep them growing and learning, our guests share their experiences that have shaped their journey and led them to where they are now. Today we're joined by Diego Padula, General Manager at Kimpton Grand Roatán Resort & Spa, Honduras's first International five-star luxury hotel, and a landmark project that he's leading with pride and purpose. Originally from Uruguay, Diego's career spans Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, including a game changing chapter in Oman that took him from Food and Beverage Specialist to full spectrum Hotel Leader. Diego brings his whole self to the role, combining bold vision with his personal passions for music, fashion and mentoring future talent. Whether it's launching a sellout food and wine festival or aiming to put his resort's restaurant on the top 50 list, he leads with heart, creativity and a deep belief for the power of belonging. Diego, welcome to the podcast.

**Diego:** Hey, thank you David. What an amazing introduction, I love it, thank you very much, that was awesome. Eunice, nice to meet you too. Thank you guys.

**David:** It's great to see you. How is life on the island?

**Diego:** Oh, it's amazing, lovely weather, the hotel is busy, everyone is happy, so it's a good mix.

**Eunice:** And you're on a beachfront location, is that right?

**Diego:** A hundred percent, literally just walking by.

**Eunice:** Describe the picture for our audience today.

**Diego:** Okay, so if you can imagine now, actually my back now is a little bit—it's too sunny, but literally you can walk from the hotel into the beach. So, you have a beautiful infinity pool, and after that one you have the best beach in the whole Roatán, Honduras. You have the second biggest reef in the world in front of us, you can literally walk. And for example, if you look to do scuba diving, in this hotel you can literally get up and just walk into the water to do scuba diving, so. And you have the best sunset in the world. So, I don't know if I sold it correctly, but it sounds like a good plan.

**David:** Yeah, you're painting quite a picture, Diego. It sounds like an incredible property. Before we dig into your story, Diego, let's do a quick-fire warm up called Early CheckIn, which is a this or that series of questions just to get to know you a little bit better. So, Eunice, I'll kick things off and then we'll go from there. Fantastic. So, Diego, room service or rooftop dining?

**Diego:** Rooftop dining.

**David:** Boutique hotel or five-star luxury resort?

**Diego:** Five-star luxury resorts.

**Eunice:** Nice, lovely. Quick chat in reception or a formal team huddle?

**Diego:** Quick chat in reception.

**David:** I think this one's going to be quite tricky for you, Diego; football or fishing?

**Diego:** Football. That's my passion, wherever I leave for work, wherever any time that they play, I always watch it. I remember in Oman and Dubai, they were playing 3:00 AM in the morning, but I was always awake to see it.

**Eunice:** That's followership, isn't it?

**David:** Yeah, dedicated fan. We'll have to have a separate conversation about football at some point, Diego.

**Diego:** We should, yeah.

**Eunice:** Packed itineraries or spontaneous schedules?

**Diego:** I would say packed. My wife, she would say that, yes. And I try to have it a little bit like an itinerary, then you can play about that one. But yeah, I would say packed, yeah.

**David:** Creative brainstorming or strategic planning?

**Diego:** Creative brainstorming, definitely. That's what I love. With my team, we sit down, we see it, we just have one idea and say, okay, how do we get here? And that brainstorming is great, yeah, this one is very easy to reply.

**Eunice:** Good, okay. Suite upgrade or surprise amenity?

**Diego:** Suite upgrade.

**Eunice:** Me too, yes, definite winner.

**Diego:** Look, I will take note. When you come to visit me, I know what you prefer.

**Eunice:** Yeah. Perfect, sounds great.

**David:** Coffee or tea?

**Diego:** Coffee. Actually, let me add one more, Mate. So, it's like a tea that we take, it's very typical in Uruguay.

**Eunice:** And do you have milk, sugar? How's it made?

**Diego:** No, no, it's just water. It's like a herb tea but actually we put in a base, and then you just serve it like hot water every time, so it's continuous. It's something very good use for the community. You can actually have both, but this is also like a social interaction that we used to have, people from South America, Argentina, Uruguay sometimes when we need to talk. Usually you say let's have a coffee, we say let's have a Mate. So, it's more social than a coffee, yeah.

**David:** Tailored suit or smart casual?

**Diego:** Smart casual, hundred percent.

**Eunice:** I mean, you're on an island, of course.

**Diego:** Yeah. I will tell you a funny story. When I just moved into the island, I remember I bought like five suits, do you know how much time they last? Like two weeks. After two weeks, no way you can use suits here but I gave it a shot.

**Eunice:** Okay. Island life or big city living? I think I know what the answer is.

**Diego:** Yes, I think what you're thinking is right, island life, a hundred percent. It's beautiful. It's a completely different type of life. Look, I came from five years in Middle East, two years in Mexico City, so trust me, you need island life sometimes, especially after these years in the city life.

**Eunice:** Yeah. What's your favorite part of island life?

**Diego:** We wake up every day, 4:30 AM, 5:00 AM every day, no clock, we just wake up because the life of the island is like this is more relaxed. Usually, the hotel here and everything stops after 9:00 PM. So, if you have an event, you have a wedding, it usually finish very early on the day and very early start of the day. So, you literally go with the flow of the sun, which is great and unique. So, I enjoy the sunset, I see the sunset every day and I see the sunrise every day, so which is great.

**Eunice:** That's gorgeous, isn't it?

**David:** Sounds beautiful, yeah. So, family trip or solo adventure?

**Diego:** No, family trip. I mean, when I say family, I say with my wife.

**David:** You've got a dog as well, is that right, Diego?

**Diego:** I do. He's called Café; coffee in English. It's a small Shih Tzu, he's been with us for five years and he was traveling to Dubai, Mexico, now here. So, he's from Ukraine originally, so he's a traveler dog already.

**Eunice:** Well-traveled.

**Diego:** Yeah, well traveled dog, yeah.

**David:** Nice. And finally, lead from the front or support from the sidelines?

**Diego:** No, lead from the front, yeah. I like to work in front, otherwise, I get bored in the office, so you know, sometimes you need to do the job, you need to go in the office, but I try to be, as much, outside as possible. And with this weather and this view, it's no way you stay in the office, you need to go and enjoy it.

**David:** I see, there you go. I feel like we've learned a lot about you already just through that segment, so thank you for sharing. We'd also like to talk to you about your incredible journey as a GM. To start, I'd love to know more about how you got started in hospitality and why you chose this route as a career?

**Diego:** So, this is not a funny story, but actually when I was around 12, 13, I was in my mother's job and one of the colleagues of my mother she used to teach hospitality in Uruguay, which was something very new over there. And he told me, look, you have the profile to work in hospitality. In other way, I keep it in my mind for the upcoming years, and I decide to give a shot. I do the hotel hospitality training in Uruguay and my first ever job was as an assistant waiter in banquet putting coffee breaks at 4:00 AM in the morning in Uruguay. And that was my first ever job, and from that one I started to build up my career. But it started very, very from below and I make all my career to what I am now.

**David:** Was it football that you initially...? Obviously I know it's a love of yours and a passion, was it something that you initially pursued and then you ended up taking an avenue into hospitality?

**Diego:** Yeah. Look, I used to play what you call futsal, it's indoor soccer in Latin America and I was playing at the same time, I was doing both things. Actually, I managed to play in my team where I was, and I played some international games, and I was very happy on that one, but at one point I need to decide about the career. I was good in football, but not so good, I prefer to say that I was better putting coffee than scoring goals, let's put it this way. And at one point I need to decide, so I just leave the football and then move into hospitality. But always, as I told you, I try to keep it wherever you are in the world, one soccer ball, you will unite everyone.

**David:** There's a lot of parallels obviously between a team within football and obviously managing a hotel and a team of people within your property.

**Diego:** Hundred percent, it's a parallel. You are like a person in charge and then you have to put the right players on the right position. And in other words, you need to switch them and you need to change the strategy if you're losing, so yeah, definitely, it's like football.

**Eunice:** I just wonder, Diego, all these learning experiences that we have throughout our life, what do you think has really shaped you to become the GM that you are today about that learning?

**Diego:** So, look, my whole career was based on food and beverage. I started, as I told you, as a waiter, and then I ended up moving to Europe. I lived eight years in Spain, I ended up being director of food and beverage in Spain, then I moved back to Uruguay when I was director of food and beverage. Brazil, the same, F&B. And then Mexico. And there was a time in our career, like all of us, we need to decide, okay, what is next? Okay, I love what I'm doing, but you need to leave your comfort zone, so. And that was the shifting moment is when I was in Mexico and I said, okay, I need to make my next role, so it's not easy to get the next role. So, I mean, I was very lucky that my wife was always very supportive, and we were looking for the exposition, and Oman come up into the role. So, imagine, for me it's going to be like a big decision. It's not only that I will be put in an EAM position, like number two of the hotel, but in a completely different part of the world, and we took it. And I think that was one of the biggest decisions that I made because it could be difficult for so many reasons. But as of now, I'd say that was the right move to make for my career, that was the switch, otherwise maybe I will continue being in F&B, but sometimes you need to take some risk, and I think it was a big one, but it works very well.

**Eunice:** It's incredible, isn't it? Sometimes our biggest learning roles are the roles that we like the least, because they force us to learn quickly.

**Diego:** A hundred percent. You don't know. Look, all the F&B, whenever F&Bs listened to this one, they will understand. We are terrified about rooms. We think it's like a completely different—I don't know, it's like another world. It have nothing to do with that. So, I was afraid, but I was good, I have a very good teacher, Gerald Chevasson, he was my GM. He was helping me a lot during this period and you ended up learning like all this new universe that you don't know.

**Eunice:** What were you afraid of? That's really interesting.

**Diego:** I don't know. I see too much. Sometimes there's so many meetings, so many pickup reports, check in and check outs, arrivals. And there was some time for F&B, it's completely different because every day is different, you don't have a game plan. You do have some bookings but you know exactly what could happen, and the rooms is much more planning ahead, which is a good thing, because you know exactly how many people will come tomorrow, the next week, and you go and organise. But sometimes it's more like I'm afraid, that will usually help, but after we just start to dive in on these new departments, you ended up enjoying and loving it, and it's good to see that how you can match both departments. You can be something from F&B to rooms and room from F&B, housekeeping and engineering and everything. So, it's lovely, it's great. That's what I love about being a GM, is that you can oversee all these different departments that you can try to do all of them, play it together.

**Eunice:** I hope that gives some of our audience or listeners an insight into if you're in hospitality or think about joining hospitality, it's actually very fluid in your different career paths, isn't that right?

**Diego:** Yes, correct. And advice that I will give is something that I didn't do, and now I know with the time, is you need to start asking for cross-training through the departments. I think if you ask me, Diego, what you would do differently? I would say even before I move to Oman, I would try to be more focused and try to get exposure and know the departments so you understand more about it. So that is a good advice.

**David:** You mentioned your mentor a second ago and is there any advice that he gave you that particularly stuck with you?

**Diego:** I have a lot of mentors during my career, I do want to mention that. I mean, all the GMs in my career, I learned from them. Every single one of them, they gave me some good advice. But if you talk as a mentor, I have one; his name is Miguel Piñero. We worked together for almost 12 years. He knows me from Uruguay, from the beginning. He was always like the person I always go to and he's the guy when I have doubts or when I don't know what to do in my career, this is the person that I have next to me. When you build a career like this one, especially when you travel

to so much, you don't have the same bosses all the time, it's very good to have somebody that you trust, somebody that you want to be like him. You see him as a role model for you and he was great. And I think Miguel, he made me to make the best decision, or the bold decision in my career, when I took my first GM position because it was with him, he offered me to join his company, but I was not sure. Imagine, it's the same situation again, okay, I was afraid of rooms, but imagine that now I need to do sales, I need to do marketing. So, it's like a lot of things that are coming up, things that maybe you didn't know, and he was the guy who say, Diego, you are ready, you will learn, don't worry, and I think that was the best decision.

**Eunice:** Fantastic. I wonder how you connect your own career opportunities, and you play them down to your own team that you have in the property, how do you go about doing that as a leader?

**Diego:** Look, that one is something that we think of hospitality that it's something very difficult to work with. We don't have vacation, where everyone is on vacation, you are working. If you respect them, if you work, and if you push and you understand that there are steps that you need to take in your career, that you're willing to take this step on these bold moves, like for example, in my case, you go to Middle East to take a GM position, you have a career in the future, right? That's something that I try to show especially in a destination like this one where this is the first managed hotel in this country, that this is not just a transitional work. If you want to, there is a career for you, and there is my case. And I try to show also with other cases, I mean, there is a lot of people here in my executive team that are from Honduras, they traveled abroad from 10 years, they make their career and now they're back as a director of the hotel, so.

**David:** Thanks Diego. We'd like to talk to you a little bit about culture and belonging, this feels like a topic that's really close to the heart of your hotel. What does the resort mean to you and your team?

**Diego:** Every resort that you come in as a GM, and your goal is to make it a profitable resort at the end of the year. But this one, it was something that I love, and that's one of the reasons I decided to choose this one, it's because this is more like just a resort, it's a big impact for the island. So, we are located in Honduras, but in a small island called Roatán, which is a beautiful island. It's quite known in the US but not so much to the world. I mean, even myself. For the first time I was applying for this job, I have to Google where Roatán is. And I imagine you guys, wherever you see this podcast is doing the same right now.

**Eunice:** We did the same.

**Diego:** We want to bring what IHG means, we're going to leave and leave a legacy behind, but for the locals. And that's the approach that we want to do. And also, it

happens with internal promotion, something that we are also extremely proud. We have opened almost one year and a half, and we already provided 40 internal promotions. So, we try to show to them that we believe in them and that there is an opportunity to grow. So, I think that is the key of my strategy to show the belonging to everyone, is this, to make an impact. Well, the expats will leave because even though we are in love of Honduras, in one point we will have to leave, but the idea is to leave a legacy behind, but run by the locals.

**Eunice:** Gosh, that's extraordinary. 40 internal moves over 18 months, that is a testament to, certainly, to your leadership. It's probably a testament to the culture to IHG as well. Talk to us a little bit about how that shows up in your every day in the team.

**Diego:** We're taking care of our staff and we try to listen to them, and we try to then to understand this belonging that we say. And you mentioned IHG is about this one. Actually, it was my first property working in IHG, and I'm extremely thankful for making the decision. And I can see it from day one how much we're taking care of our people, taking care of them and try to develop them. And I feel also in myself. I know I have a mentor for my whole career, but lately I have a new mentor, which is Erika. Erika, she's my boss now. She's based in Miami, she's running Kimpton's. And she showed me how IHG is. She is always there for me, for whatever I needed. Personal, work. So, all this, this is new for me, like all this type of responsibilities and literally taking care about as a human being, also as a professional. And that's what I try to cascade to my team is try to listen to them, I try to be, as much as possible, in the front of the house, talking to everyone, try to know what they like, what they don't like, try to understand what football team they like, or. So, I try to make these connections. And the idea for all of this at the end is that they feel valued and they feel that they belong to us. And also, another word I have to use it to give empowerment to them, empowerment to growth, empowerment to make mistakes and empowerment to learn.

**Eunice:** Fantastic. It's so good to hear those examples, isn't it, David?

**David:** Yeah, incredibly, I know. In terms of how you personally foster that kind of inclusive and empowering culture that you have within the hotel, I know you talked about ensuring that colleagues feel seen, heard and valued. Could you talk to us a little bit about those kind of key pieces and what you lean into as you lead most?

**Diego:** For me, the front of the house is always the person who give you all the information. So, one thing that I do here, and I do in every hotel, is I try to have monthly meetings but only with the staff. So, for example, if there is a restaurant, I want to have me and them, no supervisor, no managers, just all of us in a meeting room, chitchat. I try to understand how they feel, what they see, because usually the best idea came from those meetings. So, I want them to have this trust, that they

can see me walking, stop me and try to ask a question, or they have an issue they can run to me. But also, on the other hand, I try to give empowerment to my managers, so it's not that you have this connection with this GM, but there is something in between that the manager can handle, I always try to give the manager the empowerment because otherwise you will take power from them. But I think this kind of meeting, I try to be with them, try to foster these trust that they can easily come to my office, sometimes just receive a WhatsApp, Diego, we need to talk to you, I'll say, okay guys, I think that was a big change in something that also we tried to foster with me and also to my team to do the same, so everyone listen. So, everyone have the chance to be listened to. So, I put in my calendar this meeting, so I know I'm going to do it, but also they have the chance that they can talk to me anytime.

**David:** Oh, it's refreshing to hear. I mean, a creative idea can come from anywhere, isn't it? So, to know that whatever the level or the hierarchical status that everyone can be heard and have a voice, I know that's something that's really important to you within our team as well, Eunice.

**Eunice:** We talk a lot about purpose, community, belonging. And I think if you get though that myriad of circle just right, you create stickiness for people to stay, you give them a reason, you give them joy. And I often say in the team, if you have super happy colleagues, they do their best work, and you can feel it when people enjoy their role.

**Diego:** Look, one strategy that we have here is because, as I told you, this could take of another purpose, which is positioning Roatán. So, I try to involve all of them that they feel proud that they're actually making a change for their country. We're doing incredible events like the food and wine festival that we did for two days, 400 people each day. So, they recognise it now that whatever we're doing here, they have an impact for Honduras in the world, and that's something else that I also try to add to the circle, and they feel that they're making a difference.

**David:** It's time for our CheckIn, CheckOut segment. So, I'm going to give you a typical GM task and can you tell us whether you would CheckIn if it's your thing or if you would CheckOut if it's something that you would perhaps rather delegate, so.

**Diego:** Okay, let's do it.

**Eunice:** Greeting VIP guests.

**Diego:** CheckIn.

**Eunice:** Yes.

**David:** Interviewing and onboarding new hires.

**Diego:** CheckIn. I think it's extremely important. Actually, my P&C, she's awesome in doing it, so I would say both.

**Eunice:** Slightly linked; coaching or mentoring staff members—CheckIn or CheckOut?

**Diego:** CheckIn, a hundred percent.

**David:** Personally curating the lobby playlist.

**Diego:** CheckIn, because music is something that I love, and yeah. My people can tell you, when I arrive always at the hotel early in the morning, I'm always talking about the music, the volume, let's change this, let's change that, let's change the lighting, yeah. I could be a little bit annoying on that one, so yeah, definitely, it's a CheckIn, yeah, yeah.

**David:** You have final sign off on the playlist I feel, Diego.

**Diego:** Yeah.

**Eunice:** Okay, it's a good one, Diego, okay, menu tasting with the head chef.

**Diego:** CheckIn. Yeah, CheckIn a hundred percent, yeah. Look, I tried to do this for the summer, but we're changing menus, so sometimes this CheckIn is giving you some kilos, but yeah, it's tough, I need to try new menus, yeah.

**Eunice:** What's the most favorite dish on the menu at the moment in one of your restaurants?

**Diego:** There is one, dry-aged fish that we have on the menu, which I love. It's also good for the diet so you don't have to change the calories, yeah, I would say that one.

**Eunice:** That sounds delicious. Lovely.

**David:** That sounds good. Writing a welcome note that includes a joke or fun facts.

**Diego:** CheckIn, a hundred percent.

**Eunice:** Probably doing quite a lot of those.

**Diego:** I do, yeah, but I like that. Look, here, especially when people come here, usually the people stay here almost four or five nights, so you have this chance to have this connection with the guests. They may be in a business hotel or city hotel, maybe they don't, but here is you spend the whole day in the hotel so you interact with them, and you need to start with a nice welcome letter.

**Eunice:** Okay, back to our questions. Conducting P&L reviews with the finance team.

**Diego:** CheckIn, I like it.

**Eunice:** CheckIn, numbers again, brilliant.

**Diego:** Numbers again, yeah.

**David:** Team building workshops.

**Diego:** Yeah, CheckIn, hundred percent.

**Eunice:** Taking part in the company podcast.

**Diego:** Super CheckIn.

**Eunice:** Yeah.

**David:** Responding to corporate HQ emails.

**Diego:** CheckIn.

**Eunice:** Is the right answer.

**Diego:** CheckIn of course, for everyone who's listening, CheckIn, yes.

**Eunice:** Okay, working on sustainability or wellness initiatives.

**Diego:** Yeah, CheckIn, hundred percent. And our hotel is very attached to wellness, sustainability, giving back to community, it's something that I'm extremely proud to be part of this type of resort, yeah.

**David:** Diego, let's talk about impact. Are there any goals you've set for yourself or your team recently? Maybe ones that align with your personal passions or your interests?

**Diego:** Yeah. Look, we say to giving back to the community. And sometimes, you know, when you're in a very busy hotel like this one, sometimes you need to find time, so something that we put as a goal now, and I'm very proud where we're going, it's ALF, it's Abundant Life Foundation. It's a nonprofit foundation of the owners and they're doing a great job. So, what we're doing now, and I try to put it in the calendars, and we already went three times. Every month we go, all the directors and managers, to go into the nonprofit foundation and go and help, so the first time we went, we painted houses.

**David:** It's so important to be able to make a difference. And I think something that we've learned from talking to all of the GMs that we have so far, just what goes on around the community and impact the hotels have on that community is so important.

**Diego:** Yeah.

**Eunice:** Diego, I was wondering, just changing track for a minute, just around all your experience and the fact that you're at the cutting edge of luxury hospitality, what do you see as the future?

**Diego:** I did my whole career in, at the beginning, in luxury. I like to develop luxury and lifestyle luxury, until like half of my career when I found out I left luxury, when you can actually bring your personality into the job, you can be yourself, you can show your tattoos, in the past I used to hide them, now I can show. So, I fell in love with this one, and you can see that all the major brands. I started developing new brands that are on this segment, and I think Kimpton fits perfectly into the segment and we have much more experience than the rest, and we have a big legacy, and I think this is where the future of the hospitality is going and where the growing is going. So, I'm very happy to be here, I make a decision that that's the type of hotel I want to work in my career, I will not say to come back to typical luxury, but I want to continue for it be a lifestyle because this is where I belong, and when you belong to one brand and you feel yourself, I think you're not working, you're just bringing your personality to you every day.

**David:** We're going to move into our final segment where we're going to switch the focus to your hotel itself, Diego, and we're just calling it Hotel Spotlight, where we're talking about what you love most about your resort and what makes it so special to you. Do you want to kick off, Eunice?

**Eunice:** Sure, yeah. So, as you're leading the first five-star international luxury resort in Honduras, which is an incredible achievement by the way.

**Diego:** Thank you.

**Eunice:** How did it feel on the first day that you opened to your guests? Describe some of the feelings that you had.

**Diego:** Yeah. Look, unfortunately, I was not here since the opening, I just came up after a few months that we opened. But I can think about the feeling is, you mentioned before, we are the first five-star hotel. It sounds very, very beautiful, which it is, and I'm very proud to be leading this one. But also, you have something that you need to take into consideration because that means that since you're the first one, none of your staff have this experience to work in this environment. Look, one thing I'm extremely proud and I know this is linked about what David has mentioned before is, in the hotel we are 265 people working, 260 are from Honduras, so only five of us who are not from Honduras.

**Eunice:** Gosh, it's astonishing.

**Diego:** It's incredible. It's the first time in my career that this happened that you have such an amount of locals, but also this comes with pride. They're very proud of what

they're doing. They're very proud about what we're achieving and what we're looking for. They have something that no others have is they have hospitality in their blood, they have the smile, they can look here with everyone, to interact in any interaction of the hotel, you're talking with a local, people who live in the island. So, they can tell you, in the housekeeping, they can tell you where to go for breakfast, where to go for dinner, which beach to see, and they show with pride. And that's something that you cannot teach. So, I always say that's the most difficult part, this already came with them, so our show now is trying to continue elevating these experiences and we are getting there. We did get a lot of recognition worldwide, we won a lot of awards last year, we continue winning awards this year. So, I think we are on the right path. And this impact, what I told you is, and this is also linked from the beginning when we're talking about to the training is for them to embrace this hospitality because this is something they will take with them. And same as we have 40 people getting promoted, we lost very good people because they get a great job in another hotel in the island. And that's something that I encourage, I am very happy. Look, if you found a better position for your growth, let's do it. It's the most proud thing that I have.

**Eunice:** Yeah. Congratulations. I mean, I'm in the world of talent, all my career's been talent and that's extraordinary to have such a high percentage of local talent, and the training and everything, so well done, that's fantastic.

**David:** Diego, I know that music is something that is obviously incredibly close to your heart, so I just wanted to know if your hotel had a signature soundtrack, what would it be?

**Diego:** If it were mine, Diego, it will be house music. I love house music, so. I don't think it will work with my hotel, but if there has to be, if you see my playlist, you'll find this type of music. And also 80s I like, it could be '80s, I like the '80s and house music.

**David:** We'll have to add a link to your playlist.

**Diego:** Yeah, maybe, I'm not so proud to share, but.

**Eunice:** So, if you were listening to music in the hotel, which is your favorite spot that you would go to, to listen to that music?

**Diego:** Definitely the sunset time at the beach. It's the water, the sun and the bar, beautiful sunset right in front of you, that's the magic circle—sunset cocktails.

**Eunice:** Oh, I feel like I should be planning my next holiday.

**Diego:** I hope I convinced you, David and everyone who's listening, you need to come to Honduras, you will not regret, trust me, you will love it.

**David:** When you want a little bit of peace and quiet or just to reflect, is there anywhere in the hotel that you find yourself going or is there a particular spot?

**Diego:** Look, we have some beautiful terraces within the hotel, so then when I walk the walkthrough of the hotel, sometimes at the end I just want to go there, like 5, 10 minutes by myself, just look at the early sun and thinking, and try to disconnect a little bit. The beauty of this type of resort where you work here is when you walk through the hotel, there is such a beautiful path that you can follow. So, there is one, if you're going to go to the spa, I can go through the main road, I can go through this jungle, I can go through the beach, so you always found the spot that you are with yourself, just with you and your thinking. So, that's also the beauty to work in a resort like this.

**David:** Thank you, Diego, thanks so much. I think everyone listening will have taken away a real purpose and meaning from your journey, so thank you for sharing it. Before we go, we have one final question that's come from our previous guest, Mohamed Mahmoud, he's asked, looking back at your career, what's the one piece of personal advice you'd give to your younger self that isn't directly related to your professional skills?

**Diego:** It's difficult to divide a professional to your personal path, but definitely when I was doing my career through F&B I should definitely start to look for another cross-training. That's definitely a thing that if I have the chance to come back in time, I would say to the youngest Diego, look, build your path in where you have your passion and where you feel strong, but start to be prepared for the next step. So, maybe I was not so much prepared when I took the step, so definitely that will be my advice that I would read to my younger self.

**David:** And that's it for this episode of Leading a New Era, the podcast from IHG that spotlights incredible leadership in luxury hospitality. If you are enjoying the series, be sure to follow, subscribe, and join us next time where we'll be traveling east to catch up with the wonderful Melissa Tang GM at Six Senses Qing Cheng Mountain in China.