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THE WORLD'S BEST HOTEL GENERAL MANAGER 2015



# KING *of* HEARTS

Loved and respected for his professional expertise, energetic 'can-do' attitude, attention to detail and near-fanatic commitment to creating the 'best-ever' guest experience, French hospitality maestro **M. PIERRE BARTHES** is a boon to the trade and market alike. We present a curtain raiser to the **World's Best Hotel General Manager 2015.**

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# What Magic Moves This Man of Miracles?

It isn't hard to uncover praise of Pierre Barthes, our selection for the title of World's Best Hotel General Manager 2015. Social networks from LinkedIn to Facebook carry glowing tributes while travel sites like TripAdvisor follow the admirable quality of hotels that Barthes has managed.

Thought and spoken well of by the

is probably one of the best tributes from two reception staff (2004) at the Mandarin Oriental Macau (now the Grand Lapa).

"He leads by example. He teaches us how to find solutions and not just depend on others to fix our problems," says a former colleague (1998) from Barthes' days in Hawaii.

Barthes is still remembered fondly in San Francisco (2000) who describe him as an 'energetic go-getter' and always

gym to the ballroom. He has that knack of being liked, admired and feared at the same time so I guess that's a gift few general managers can claim," says a front office manager, of the talented M. Barthes.

In Beijing, Barthes is remembered for his crises handling talent.

Perhaps one of the better references comes from his colleague at the Mandarin Oriental, Pudong, Shanghai, China.

"Pierre maintains the highest level



Pierre Barthes with Jackie Chan, Karen Mok, Sophie Marceau and Tony Blair at Mandarin Oriental, Pudong, Shanghai.

travel trade, leaders of the private and public sector and of course colleagues who have served with him, Barthes' real crowing glory comes from the God of all hospitality – THE GUEST!

"You know when he's the General Manager of a hotel simply because everything is as it should be. Perfection in terms of product and service is spot on. He amplifies the meaning of the famed Mandarin Oriental service, whereas others have yet to achieve the standards he's set," says one long-term fan and admirer.

"Hospitality flows in his veins and coupled with his deft handling of people Pierre is an all-round value proposition for any owner," remarks a fellow General Manager.

"Pierre reaches across all cultural barriers, has an instinct for talent, has the patience to train and work with all levels of employees. He can deal with adversity and copes well with crises," says another Pierre Barthes fan and loyal guest who first got to enjoy and experience his style of management in Macau.

## Just Who is Pierre Barthes?

"Mr. Barthes cares for the little people, that's what we remember him for,"

one to be relied upon.

In New York (2004), Barthes' pragmatic approach to management remains a benchmark. Former colleagues recount his management style proudly describing him as "possessing an infectious enthusiasm."

The Mandarin Oriental in Kuala Lumpur (2010) also entrusted to Barthes remains in awe of his high professional standards. "While he trusts his team's judgment, he tests regularly for consistency and that's taught us a lot about guests' expectations says a manager from the food & beverage department.

"He wants perfection in everything, from the spa to the restaurants, to the



Linda Lin (Cake shop, MO, Pudong): "Mr. Barthes is Chinese inside and French outside."

of customer focus and thinks from the customer's perspective. He rightly holds his team and individuals responsible and accountable for their and the hotels' performance and pushes for improved performance. He is results-oriented and driven. He strives relentlessly for superior outcomes and continuously reviews business practices in order to improve productivity, quality and efficiency," says a manager at the MO, Pudong, Shanghai.

Also proud to have served with him at the MO in Macau, a communications colleague says: "Pierre Barthes provided the best example of gracious hospitality with his deep knowledge of Mandarin Oriental culture as well as extraordinary commitment to ensuring impeccable service standards."

From an MOHG Human Resources official we hear: "Pierre Barthes is a strong visionary leader who understands the requirements of his customers and employees very well. He has a strong focus on delivering superior service standards and a true luxury experience. Pierre is well respected by those who work for him."

But, the greatest tribute perhaps comes from the most unlikely source



In the kitchens of the MO Pudong:  
Just as happy to learn as to teach.



“Every single part of a hotel is an offering you make to your guest who for all intents and purposes is your real boss.

No act of heartfelt service is below a good hotel manager who is unafraid of leading by example.”

— **M. Pierre Barthes**

– a girl who serves at the hotel’s cake shop. “Mr. Barthes is Chinese inside and French outside.” What greater tribute can a foreign GM enjoy than one that clearly suggests his arrival in the hearts of the people he serves?

### Friends & Admirers

Few general managers impact such high profile guests like actresses and business tycoons as Barthes does. Of his style of management entrepreneur par excellence Dato Farah Khan, founder and president of Malaysia’s leading luxury retailer The Melium Group says: “I have been a regular client of the Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur for years. I have had the pleasure to personally experience one of the most dedicated, hardworking, decisive, attentive GMs I have ever met. He lives and breathes his brand not just for his hotel but always recommending other Mandarin Oriental sites around the world. I wish him the best of success as he truly deserves it.”

Adored silver screen icon and actress Michelle Yeoh says: “Pierre is simply the best! He is a hotelier who loves his work and all who come his way. Charming as he is impeccable in every way, his thoughtfulness always keeps homesickness at bay.”

### The Secret’s Simple, Really

So, what’s the secret, pray tell, we ask.

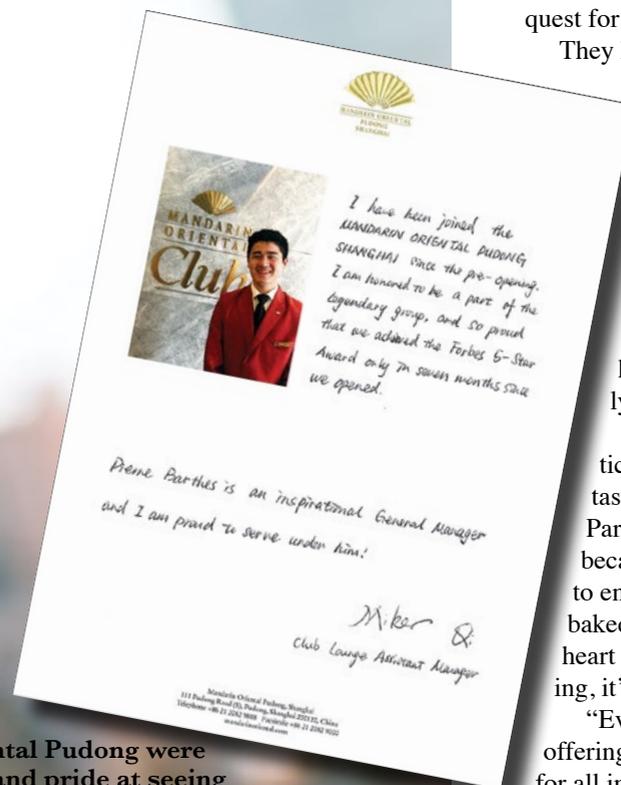
“There is no secret. I guess I got this quest for perfection from my parents.

They kept going on about giving the tiniest job more than your best so it became a habit.

Yes, I am a perfectionist but it isn’t about ‘me’. It’s about creating bespoke service that surprises and touches the hearts and emotions of the guests. I want my hotel staff to be a family you want to come home to. Nothing less. Absolutely, nothing less!

“To me it’s all about authenticity. They say a crisp croissant tastes special on the streets of Paris. Does it really? Yes, it does because it’s an awesome feeling to enjoy the crispiness of a freshly baked croissant or baguette in the heart of France. It’s warm, it’s exciting, it’s sexy!

“Every single part of a hotel is an offering you make to your guest who for all intents and purposes is your real boss. He/she is the reason you are



Staff at the Mandarin Oriental Pudong were glossy-eyed with happiness and pride at seeing their GM wear their uniform at the shoot on the yacht overlooking the hotel.



**Receiving his 15-year anniversary pin last year from Richard Baker (Executive Vice President of Operations) and Group Sales and Marketing Director Michael Hobson.**

employed. I say, put your best foot forward because doing our best is a reflection of our ability.”

“Yes, the light bulb incident,” Barthes recalls. As GM of the Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur in 2012, Barthes abruptly interrupted a media interview to draw his staff’s attention to one single broken light bulb that he spotted high above in the galaxy of lights that lit up the lofty ceiling. He then continued with the interview as if nothing had happened. It lives on as testimony to Barthes’ “fix-it-right-now” style of management.

“Now, is always the best time to right a wrong. Don’t wait.”

Ever the modest professional Barthes credits many sterling professionals who have influenced his work. “I’ve been fortunate to have served with remarkable hotelier Didier Le Calvez who was my first ‘hotel’ boss as Food & Beverage Director at the Westin Galleria Dallas and now manages Le Bristol in Paris.

“Another towering figure in my career remains Jim Treadway who was my GM in Hawaii. He went on to become the President of Westin Hotels & Resorts.

“Of course, another inspirational figure who has hugely influenced my career is Edouard Ettetdgui Group Chief Executive of Mandarin Oriental. For his guidance, trust and for standing by me in some of my darkest moments I will forever be grateful. He is an extraordinary professional from whom I continue to learn.

“I also learnt much from Wolfgang Hultner, former CEO of the Mandarin Oriental in the Americas. During his ten years as CEO Wolfgang opened corporate offices in San Francisco and New York, and was responsible for opening six new Mandarin Oriental hotels in the US and Mexico and for various hotel acquisitions. He is a remarkable professional and it was an hon-



“It’s about creating *happiness* in others. It’s about surpassing expectations. It’s about making a hotel a home away from home.”



our serving with him,” says Barthes.

“I also admired Todd Lapidus (founder and president of C3) for his distinguished international career in strategy, service innovation, vision, mission, brand architecture and process improvement. Todd has spent 30 years successfully translating this insight into innovative improvements for clients on four continents. I admire his work greatly.

“Nicholas Clayton, my Group Operations Director when I moved to Macau was immensely motivational and appreciative of my efforts to improve the reliability of our company’s service standards (L.Q.E.). He appreciated my passion in moving our organisation from ‘good-to-great’.”

### The Power of Love

At the seat of true hospitality is the spirit of love for one’s fellow human being, says Pierre Barthes. “I guess I get that love of hospitality from France – a country that is world famous for its iconic hotels, spotless silver service and spirit of customer care.”

“Hospitality provides people with that comfort that’s growing so scarce in today’s world. But one man alone cannot produce that all-encompassing essence, that rich fragrance. You need a team of professionals that share your vision. Together, we can create a magnificent life for both, our guests and ourselves.” says Barthes reminding us of that song made famous by Belgian singer Jacques Brel.

The song *Quand on n’a que l’amour* touches on the power of love to transform not only personal relationships, but also individual and societal experience:

#### Parole de *Quand On N’a Que L’amour*:

Quand on n’a que l’amour  
A s’offrir en partage  
Au jour du grand voyage  
Qu’est notre grand amour

Quand on n’a que l’amour  
Mon amour toi et moi  
Pour qu’éclatent de joie  
Chaque heure et chaque jour

Quand on n’a que l’amour  
Pour vivre nos promesses  
Sans nulle autre richesse  
Que d’y croire toujours

Quand on n’a que l’amour  
Pour meubler de merveilles  
Et couvrir de soleil  
La laideur des faubourgs

Quand on n’a que l’amour  
Pour unique raison  
Pour unique chanson  
Et unique secours

Quand on n’a que l’amour  
Pour habiller matin  
Pauvres et malandrins  
De manteaux de velours  
*Quand on n’a que l’amour*  
A offrir en prière  
Pour les maux de la terre  
En simple troubadour

*Quand on n’a que l’amour*  
A offrir à ceux-là  
Dont l’unique combat  
Est de chercher le jour

*Quand on n’a que l’amour*  
Pour tracer un chemin  
Et forcer le destin  
A chaque carrefour

*Quand on n’a que l’amour*  
Pour parler aux canons  
Et rien qu’une chanson  
Pour convaincre un tambour

*Alors sans avoir rien*  
*Que la force d’aimer*  
*Nous aurons dans nos mains,*  
*Amis le monde entire*

The Mediazone Group of Publications along with the French community, fans of the Mandarin Oriental Group and admirers of M. Pierre Barthes take this opportunity to salute this humble artisan of unmatched hospitality who joined the Group on July 20, 1998, and today completes 16 years of devotion to his brand and many more of service to us all.

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— **Pierre Barthes**  
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