

Hihotels focuses on communication

Atlanta-based hihotels by Hospitality International operates more than 230 hotels nationwide across five brands including Red Carpet Inn, pictured, along with Scottish Inns, Master Hosts Inns, Downtowner Inns and Passport Inn. The company established a franchisee advisory council to enhance communication, collaboration and decision-making between the franchiser and franchisees.



Its advisory council targets network growth via stronger partnerships

By Vishnu Rageev R.

The franchise document is often the most complex aspect of franchising. Simplifying it can be achieved by involving a franchisee advisory council, which enhances communication, collaboration and decision-making between franchisors and franchisees.

In March 2023, hihotels by Hospitality International, an economy hotel chain founded in 1982, established its first advisory council to strengthen franchisee relationships. The Atlanta-based

company operates more than 230 hotels nationwide across five brands spanning the economy to midscale segments; Red Carpet Inn, Scottish Inns, Master Hosts Inns, Downtowner Inns and Passport Inn.

It is already seeing positive results and advancing initiatives that support mutual growth through the council.

The hihotels advisory council comprises five franchisees, a vendor representative and President and CEO Chris Guimbellot. The council members bring experience from various facets of hospitality, offering diverse perspectives on challenges facing hihotels brands. Their expertise in operations, financial management, guest services, and sales ensures a well-rounded approach to problem-solving.

"Launching the advisory council is another step toward becoming the top choice for economy hotel franchising," said Guimbellot. "We rely on the council's

input on programs and initiatives, as well as ways to maximize franchisees' ROI."

The HAC members include Jill Atfield, owner of Highland Hills Cabins in Boone, North Carolina; Amit Patel, owner of a Red Carpet Inn in Rochester, Minnesota; Tejal Patel, owner of a Scottish Inns & Suites in Hitchcock, Texas; Jaimesh Patel, owner of a Red Carpet Inn in Gibbstown, New Jersey; Laurie Bechler, area vice president and general manager of Sahre Hospitality Solutions in Hendersonville, Tennessee; and Kishan Patel, owner of a Red Carpet Inn in Pulaski, New York. The HAC meets quarterly to shape the system's direction, gather feedback, and address key industry issues, with the next meeting scheduled for Sept. 22.

"What sets HAC apart is its commitment to transparency and collaboration," said Tejal. "We foster open communication between franchisees and the corporate team, actively seeking feedback and implementing solutions

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Chris Guimbellot, hihotels by Hospitality International president and CEO

that reflect our collective voice. Hihotels leadership remains responsive to franchisee concerns, ensuring decisions prioritize franchisee needs and strengthen partnerships.”

Tejal said the HAC members base their responses on their personal experiences.

“We are franchisees ourselves, so we understand the day-to-day challenges and opportunities of running a property,” she said.

The council primarily guides the growth and development of the hihotels network, said Amit.

“It serves as a strategic think tank, offering insights that shape the company’s future,” he said. “The unique aspect is that franchisees are directly involved in steering the company’s direction, ensuring our recommendations align with both the brand’s growth and the long-term vision for its franchisees.”

Brand impact

Each hihotel brand receives corporate support, including customer service, local sales and marketing training and access to a national reservation system supported by Sabre Hospitality Solutions.

“The collaboration between franchise directors and council members provides valuable insights into policies that enhance operational excellence, service quality and brand integrity across all properties,” said Guimbellot. “Input from both franchisees and customers, who understand client needs firsthand, helps guide the brand toward growth.”

Scottish Inns and Scottish Inns & Suites operate more than 100 U.S. locations, each averaging 42 rooms. The HVS 2020 Hotel Franchise Fee Guide ranks Scottish Inns with the lowest franchise cost relative to room revenue at 3.7 percent among economy brands. The brand offers competitive agreements, practical standards, and a reservation system, making it ideal for conversions

and new builds.

Similarly, Red Carpet Inn and Red Carpet Inn & Suites provide value for owners aiming to maximize returns while managing room rates. These properties, ranging from limited to full-service in the economy to midscale price range, operate over 70 locations with an average of 68 rooms. The HVS 2020 guide ranks Red Carpet Inn third-lowest in franchise cost relative to room revenue at 4.2 percent among economy brands.

“The unique aspect is that franchisees are directly involved in guiding the company’s direction,” said Amit. “This involvement drives growth and expansion while aligning with the company’s long-term vision. From my experience, the key difference is the collaborative approach. Significant value is placed on the franchisee perspective.”

Setting the future course

The HAC aims for consistent, strategic growth by focusing on quality properties



Tejal Patel, owner of a Scottish Inns & Suites in Hitchcock, Texas, said the HAC stands apart due to its commitment to transparency and collaboration.



Chris Guimbellot, hihotels by Hospitality International president and CEO, said the Hihotels Advisory Council provides input on programs and initiatives as well as ways to maximize franchisees’ ROI.

and expansion in the Western region. It works to improve operational efficiencies across the network by streamlining processes and reinforcing brand consistency. The council will meet on Sept. 26 to discuss a new program designed to enhance quality and boost participation among existing properties through a reward system.

“Our meeting will cover upcoming brand initiatives, recent franchisee feedback and marketing updates,” said Tejal. “We’ll also address operational improvements, franchisee support systems, and any pressing concerns since our last meeting. This will ensure alignment on the company’s growth and ongoing franchisee support.”

Tejal said the council’s long-term goals focus on strategic growth, with plans to expand into key markets and position hihotels as a leader in both affordable hospitality and ownership.

“Our short-term and long-term goals are aligned,” Tejal said. “We aim to improve operational efficiencies, expand into key markets, and position hihotels as a leader in affordable hospitality and ownership. This will be achieved through partnerships and franchise development opportunities. We are committed to representing our stakeholders and ensuring their needs drive our growth and innovation.”