

Introducing Traycee Mayer, New General Manager Of The Convention And Entertainment Center

Former Holiday Inn GM Replaces David Gordon, Who Retired Last Month

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Traycee Mayer, just settling in to her first full month as the new general manager of the Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center, likes to leave the curtains in her glass-walled ground-floor office open at all times.

Not simply because she enjoys the view – which she does – but because it also allows her to see and often return the waves of her employees as they walk by during the day.

“I work as a team,” says Mayer, waving to a passerby. “I don’t do this from the top down. I manage laterally – where I am not any more important than any employee that works for me.”

This desire to build a family with her staff radiates from Mayer almost as much as the love of her new role running the convention center, Terrace Theater, Center Theater and Long Beach Arena.

“I feel like this job was made for me,” she beams. After a moment’s thought she adds, “Or maybe, I was made for this job.”

Mayer took the reigns at the convention center on December 20, the first new general manager at the convention center since the recently retired David Gordon took the helm back in 1983.

A native of East Los Angeles and a current resident of Anaheim Hills, Mayer has spent the past 30 years in the hospitality and service industries in Southern California, with the last 22 years in the hotel business.

“Part of it has been in sales, such as director of sales and marketing for a number of hotel companies like Sheraton, Doubletree and Holiday Inn,” Mayer said. “About 14 years ago I became a general manager and that has been where my career has been since – as general manager of single properties, heading project work and managing multiple properties.” She most recently served as general manager of the Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport.

One of the clear things that Mayer brings to the job is not just her experience but her attitude about management, which centers around connecting with her employees and



“The convention center is a good facility and there are amazing employees here, but I am going to take it to the next level.”

Traycee Mayer, General Manager

Traycee Mayer took over as general manager of the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center on December 20. The previous two years she had served as general manager of the Holiday Inn at the Long Beach Airport. Mayer was named the GM by SMG, the Pennsylvania-based event management company that has a long term contract with the City of Long Beach to operate the local convention center facilities, including the Long Beach Performing Arts Center. The company, founded in 1977, operates many of the well-known convention centers, arenas, stadiums and theaters in the U.S. including the Louisiana Superdome and the Moscone Center in San Francisco. It also operates facilities in Europe and is expanding into Asia. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Thomas McConville)

taking an active and visible role in day-to-day operations.

“My philosophy is managing by walking around,” she says. “I stop and talk to employees. I get to know their names. And it doesn’t matter how many hundreds of employees I have, I stop and take a minute to listen to them and hear what they have to say.”

And according to Mayer, who starts most days before 7 a.m. walking the convention center property, it seems to be a philosophy that is striking a chord with her employees.

“Recently, I was walking around taking some pictures of some places where I would like to make some improvements on the property, both internally and outside, and employees were walking up to me and saying, ‘I heard about you,’” Mayer says.

“I told them that I am glad that they already know that they can walk up and talk to me.”

She says that while only on the job less than a month, she has already received a tremendous amount of positive feedback and input from the staff.

“I think the staff have wanted to have somebody to talk to,” Mayer says. “To listen to them and allow them to say ‘this is my idea.’”

And Mayer’s philosophy of teamwork extends beyond the workplace. She has, over the years, taken a participatory interest in the communities where she has worked.

As an example, while running the Buena Park Holiday Inn, Mayer immersed herself in the life of the community, working with organizations like the Boys & Girls Club of

Buena Park, the Buena Park Chamber of Commerce and the Dream Foundation, a group that grants wishes for the terminally ill.

Her work there did not go unnoticed and in 2004, the Cypress College Foundation named Mayer one of its Citizens of the Year, citing her long list of volunteer efforts in the Buena Park community.

Mayer says that she plans to continue this spirit of personal community involvement in Long Beach.

As for her vision of the convention center, Mayer says that while it is perhaps too early in her tenure to get down to specifics, she is confident she can be transformative.

“I am very passionate about taking good things and making them excellent – that is always my goal,” Mayer says. “The conven-



Earlier this month, the Long Beach Arena was set up to accommodate the always popular Disney On Ice show that drew fans of all ages. The Arena, with an exterior covered by renowned environmental artist Wyland’s “Planet Ocean” – the world’s largest mural – has seating for 13,500 people. The Arena has 46,000 square feet of exhibit space, with another 29,000 square feet available in the concourse. The Arena lobby provides 19,000 square feet of additional space. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Thomas McConville)

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While pointing out that she walked into a capital improvement project that is already under way for the fiscal year, one thing in addition to those improvements she would like to tackle is the outward appearance of the whole convention center complex – what she calls “the curb-appeal.”

“I have been walking around and identifying things like landscaping and appearance issues that I want to deal with,” Mayer says. “I want people to know from the outside that something is going on inside.”

Mayer also addressed past criticisms of the convention center’s inflexibility when dealing with customers – criticism she believes will no longer be an issue under her leadership.

“Certainly I have financial responsibilities,” she says, “but, as I’ve told my teams in the past, ‘rent my office if you need to. I’ll sit outside.’ It’s all about getting business – if we don’t bring business in here, we have nothing to service. We are going to be flexible and we are going to be creative. I am not going to turn business away because of some policy.

Our employees deserve to work and the city deserves to have a great business here.”

One thing she has already tackled is strengthening the ties between the convention center and the Long Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau.

“I think [CVB President and CEO] Steve Goodling has done great things for Long Beach, particularly from a marketing point of view and by bringing in new customers. I see us being tremendously strong partners and I believe that we have already built that relationship,” Mayer says.

“Steve and I have already spent a good amount of time together and we are on the same page and moving in the same direction. It’s all about repeat customers and new customers, delivering them an amazing experience in Long Beach, and making it a financially positive thing for the city.” ■