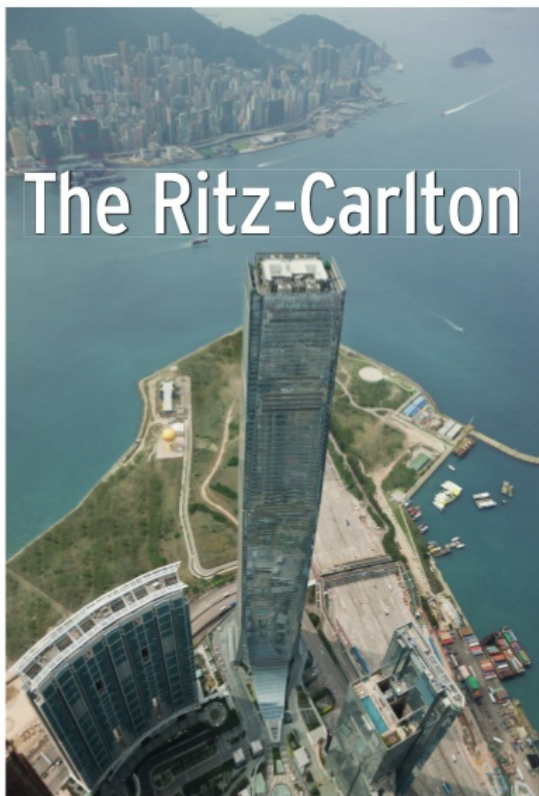


Profile



For Herve Humler, the accessible, unpretentious president and chief operations officer of The Ritz-Carlton, running the brand is a hands-on occupation, based on principles he learned early in his hospitality career.

He describes a small Ivory Coast hotel he worked at in his 20s: "There was a lodge next to a beautiful river—it was basic accommodations—not fancy. I managed that lodge for about a year and a half, and I had no idea what I was doing. In the morning, I would sit down and have breakfast with the guests. I learned the importance of getting engaged with the customer. They became friends. I learned that they will come back, and they will send friends."

It's a far cry from that small Ivory Coast lodge to The Ritz-Carlton's Hong Kong property, which opened in late March as the world's highest hotel, occupying the 102th to 118th floors topping the gleaming International Commerce Center, but Humler is quick to emphasize the importance of service over glitz. "It's not the chandelier, not

Getting to know the customer means understanding their needs, and this understanding has paid off. For example, "Over the years, we've seen more female business executives coming to the Club level," Humler says, as a result of the comfort and security the floors offer. "You have your own key, your own floor. There's always someone to attend to you. It's a hotel within a hotel."

Detailing how The Ritz-Carlton can make the most of economies of scale as a subsidiary of Marriott, while still retaining a degree of autonomy and its own brand identity, Humler explains, "We're totally separate from Marriott, but we can use some of the back office function. Marriott has the best reservation system in the world. If we can take that platform and dedicate it to The Ritz-Carlton, why not?" Similarly, says Humler, using Marriott Rewards' platform for The Ritz-Carlton Rewards is helping with the new loyalty program's growth.

First introduced in fall 2010, The Ritz-Carlton Rewards offers members the benefits of program partners, including Abercrombie



Herve Humler

the beautiful carpet. It's the people who make the difference. At my favorite restaurant, there are no tablecloths, but they know how to serve me."

& Kent, *National Geographic* Photo Expeditions and Neiman Marcus. "We believe our guest loyalty program is the best program in the top luxury tier. While our members appreciate points, they also want 'Access to the Extraordinary,' with memorable and once-in-a-lifetime experiences," Humler says.

This spring, through June 30, newly enrolled and existing The Ritz-Carlton Rewards members have an additional privilege. Members staying five nights at participating Ritz-Carlton hotels around the world will receive a \$100 Ritz-Carlton gift card, or if members stay 10 nights they will receive a gift card valued at \$250. Gift cards can be redeemed for a wide range of options, from dining in celebrity-chef restaurants and playing on PGA golf courses to spa services.

The Ritz-Carlton Rewards is free to join, and points can be earned and redeemed at The Ritz-Carlton hotels and resorts, as well as at 3,300 partner hotels around the world. Members can also earn and redeem points with 33 international air carriers.

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company currently operates 75 hotels in the Americas, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean. More than 30 hotel and residential projects are under development around the globe, and Humler says that Marriott's development offices in cities like Hong Kong and London are helping The Ritz-Carlton with its international expansion goals.

The Ritz-Carlton is the only service company to have twice earned the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, which recognizes outstanding customer service.

"I have only one mission—to create excellence every day," says Humler. "I'm doing it with my friends—staff and customers. Everybody has access to me. I get complaints too. My mission is to satisfy that customer. If you satisfy that customer, you have them for life." —Eva Leonard