

The Young and the Restless

Five Hardworking Hospitality Dreamers

DREAMbook put out a call for all-star vendors. We were looking for those individuals who gave their business everything they had. We wanted to salute people who are driven, smart, influential and, well, making it.

We chose just five people. Some of them grew up in the industry. They had the benefit of watching their families build a business and could carry on the hard work of those that came before them. Others started from scratch. Yet they all share an innate desire to achieve. Beyond achievement, they share a true passion for knowledge of their industry and their product.

We asked our five 'Young & the Restless' just three questions:

- 1 How did you get to where you are at such a young age?
- 2 What are some of the challenges you faced in hospitality and growing the business?
- 3 Where do you see the industry going in the next five years?

Stacy Garcia

president, Stacy Garcia, Inc.



1 Hard work, tenacity, and fearlessness are the top three qualities that have driven me to success at a young age. With a clear and creative vision in mind and an amazing support system including my husband and three boys, I have been able to accomplish many of my goals.

2 One challenge we have faced is the white bedding programs that have become standard in most hospitality guest rooms. Instead of viewing this as a threat to our textile business, we realized the opportunity to develop signature patterns and great design for the other areas of the guest room.

3 I am already seeing a shift toward the "boutique" concept in the industry and I think that will continue. Many major hospitality players are launching boutique brands because franchise owners are now looking for products outside of the typical cookie-cutter package. I also believe the public areas and lobby space will become important areas to set the tone of the property.

Michael Dobin,

vice president of development, Valley Forge Fabrics

1 I was lucky enough to start learning about fabric since the age of two. When my parents started our business in 1977, all of their savings and income was put into the business. We did not have a great daycare near our home, so I accompanied my parents to their office and on many business trips. I would sit on or under desks as my parents worked with suppliers and customers, and through the years, I learned a lot about fabrics, hospitality, and most of all, building alliances and friendships.

At 21, I wanted to live overseas, and I sent an application to the Peace Corps. My parents were pushing me to join Valley Forge, but I was nervous about not being able to venture out into the world on my own. My parents came up with a perfect solution. I graduated on a Sunday morning, and by Sunday evening I was on a flight to Singapore. I was able to open an office in Singapore for Valley Forge Fabrics, start our Asian and Middle Eastern sourcing, and all from a 12-hour time zone difference. I call my three-year Asian experience my "graduate schooling."

2 Hard work mixed with enjoying the company of our customers has allowed us to participate on some amazing projects. The greatest challenge has been the need to travel all over the world to continually find the next new product and the next new market. For me, this has been a welcome challenge. In college I backpacked for two summers and I paid for my travels by finding odd jobs along the way — bartending, working in a pizzeria. I once washed cars in a rental car agency in Greece for \$1.60 per hour. So when I started full time at Valley Forge, I more or less traded my backpack for a sample case, and instead of wearing flip flops and t-shirts to work, I put on suits and ties.

A great challenge for me was working in Asia as our company's chief executive and convincing people that my young age was a help and not a hindrance.

3 I see everything being completely neon. Think about those crazy ski pants we all wore in the '80s. That is what all hotel rooms will look like. Ok, kidding.

Hotel, motel, boutique, mixed-use properties, and restaurant



owners have seen a direct increase in profits from incorporating higher-end, sophisticated design. I believe that with such a major influx of design talent in our

industry and increased demand for this talent, things are getting more exciting by the minute. For myself, that just means more extensive product development, and I can't wait to discover the next emerging hospitality market.

Ana Maria Martinez-Stumpo

vice president/furniture designer, Pacific Hospitality Design, Inc.

1 I started working with my father at the young age of 13. I helped my father with the clerical work and as the years progressed I began to accompany him on his appointments and project installations. I can remember working on hotels in Las Vegas at 3 a.m. during the hotels' "slow hours." I can remember upholstering walls with yards and yards of fabric not realizing I was working in the Bellagio or the Venetian. These were the times I cherish as I was able to spend quality time with my father and see how furniture/furnishings were made and installed first-hand. I developed a true passion for furniture design and I knew I was going to follow the steps of my father.

2 Heavy competition from overseas became noticeable a few years ago. Some people I know in the business had to close their doors as they were not able to compete. However, I knew that by hanging in

there and delivering quality products with high-client service we would persevere. Most recently, my company has seen a very rapid surge in growth and I think a lot has to do with sticking it through the tough times and continuing to create innovative designs and products. The other challenge I face on an ongoing basis is competition from large companies. We compete against companies who have seven figure marketing budgets where we simply rely on word of mouth. We were once known as a "behind the scenes" company and now we are in a position where I am sitting down with celebrities and the movers and shakers of the hospitality industry who are very familiar with our company's products and services.

3 In the years ahead, I see myself creating fresh and non-traditional pieces of furniture. I am very excited about where the industry is going as I can already see the industry moving toward very bold and meaningful changes such as environmentally-friendly products.



Todd Towers

president/creative director, Farmboy Fine Arts

① Farmboy has always been about collaboration. When I started the company eight years ago I knew that if FBFA was to grow to be an amazing organization I would need to connect to people who had skills outside of my own to strengthen our offering. I have been fortunate enough to attract two great business partners and that allows us all to focus on our areas of expertise. Having partners that are all "singing from the same song sheet" makes for a very fluid and dynamic organization. This means that we have a clear vision about who we are, but where we are going has always been open for discussion. We are Canadians, so we kind of look at it like a good Hockey team...It takes a team to win the Stanley cup, and there are always a few good fights on the way.

② I love this business, as it provides a new challenge and new clients and new opportunity every day. One of Farmboy's successes has been the ability to navigate between the aesthetic intents of the designer, owner and architect and the financial requirements of the purchasing agents. We have a fantastic sales, design and production team who are open minded, creative and very

driven. I see them truly support and hold the client up to get them the best possible product on time and on budget.

③ There has been a lot of talk about the economy in America and the difficulty that we may be facing around the development of hotels.

However; we have not seen a decline in the business, I think that the properties are still spending money as there are no less travelers out there that want fantastic accommodation when they stay in. If anything, I see a more global shift to build more rooms at a higher level as tastes change.

Everyone wants a unique experience in a hotel and they are prepared to spend a little more to have it. I also think that the younger traveler and business man/woman out there will stay in a 2-3-star property but they want all the connectivity and experience that the 6-star property holds. I see people having more virtual experiences in their hotels via connectivity through ubiquitous user experience and media devices. The more people travel the more they need to connect to folks around the world and successful hotels will make this very easy and unique for each guest.



Adam Kubryk,

director of sales and marketing, Global Allies

① Nepotism got me my start in hospitality. I had seen the industry from the periphery through my parents' furniture manufacturing company, Elements by Grapevine, but never considered joining them as the business was then geared to selling home furnishings to retailers. David Cline and my father (Isaac Kubryk) started Global Allies while I was still in college, and a few years later they asked me to join the team. At the time we were still making our catalog in Microsoft Excel and the only picture on our website was the company logo so I figured that, at the very least, I could bring our marketing materials into the 21st century. Considering my young age and inexperience, I was always pleasantly surprised and quite grateful how willing industry veterans were to share

their advice and experiences. I still soak up as much as I can and it has reduced the learning curve dramatically.

② We faced many of the same challenges as other growing companies but in each challenge we've been able to find opportunity, which has led to growth. We share the challenges of our customers — making seemingly impossible timeframes work, providing a high-quality good-looking product that fits within the budget, and satisfying the demands of their customer, the end user. As a result, we have built a stronger foundation for Global Allies.

③ We will definitely see the continuation of some of today's larger trends: environmental accounta-



bility, brand differentiation through design, increasingly expected luxury and the well informed traveler. One of the fastest growing segments for our company is our international

work — we are beginning to take on more 5-star plus projects throughout China, India, the Middle East and Europe. As these markets expand to include some of the larger and more established hotel brands I believe these brands must infuse their properties with the local style and culture to distinguish themselves. While it might be comforting knowing your hotel room in L.A. can be the same as your room in Shanghai, growing globalization will lead to a greater thirst for an authentic local experience. **DB**