



***“Women are strong...
and never give up!”***

**Joanna Kostecka,
General Manager
Campanile Lodz, Poland**

Hospitality is an ideal industry for those looking for leadership, challenge and personal contact with customers. On the occasion of International Women's Day, Joanna Kostecka opens the door to her busy daily life as General Manager of the Campanile Hotel in Lodz, Poland.

Could you tell us about your career?

I started my professional life here in The Campanile Lodz in 2008. It was my first job: the receptionist in this newly opened hotel. And after a year I was appointed Assistant to the General Manager! But before this promotion I had enrolled in postgraduate MBA Polish-French Management Studies at Lyon 3 University in France. That really opened the door for me to further my career. In 2011, I was appointed First Assistant Manager at the Hotel Kyriad in Loon Plage, Dunkerque, France. This was a big adventure – a life lesson and key experience. Then, by the end of 2012, I was recruited by the Hotel Campanile in Lublin, Poland, as General Manager. After 3 years, I found myself back in my hometown of Lodz, and back at the Hotel Campanile.

Could you talk us through a typical day for you at work?

I usually begin my day by saying good morning to my team and our guests, and then I quickly review the reports from the previous day and overnight. Then my day really starts, depending on what's happening in the hotel. One day can be full of meetings, another could be spent at my desk analysing financial results, another day could find me in the front office welcoming or saying goodbye to the guests. There is no routine, and you can always count on something unplanned or unpredictable happening. We have a lot of challenges. That's why it is so important to be flexible and to keep an open mind.

Can you give us examples of the kinds of responsibilities and challenges you face?

In general, we face a lot of challenges every day. For example, staffing shortages: I need to replace somebody at the moment. Sometimes I need to find a waiter very quickly for a day shift. There are many situations. So as a general manager, we must be really open to ideas and to look for solutions that may lie outside the box!

What attracted you to working in the hotel sector and what are the things you like about your job?

The diversity of the job, which allows me to develop myself by meeting with people, facing different situations, doing different things and learning a lot and, of course, the possibility to travel. I love the contact with guests! I know that my financial reporting responsibilities are very crucial as a manager, but without guests, there's no hotel! It was very painful during the Covid-19 pandemic when we remained open in order to service the hotel but couldn't accept clients. For the hospitality sector, guest relations are absolutely crucial to success.

How would you describe the ‘Campanile vision’ in your daily work in Poland?

The Campanile vision of my job is a partnership. I have a high level of responsibility, but I know to whom I can address questions and where to go to ask for help. Even if I don't agree, I can explain my point of view and find the best option always in a positive spirit. This is very important because my mission is to build a team to create a welcoming atmosphere of well-being for my guests, for my employees, and even for myself.

How would you describe the status of women in the hotel sector?

At the Louvre Hotels Group in Poland, the majority of general managers are women. The hotel business is not easy; it's very demanding. When I leave work for the day, the hotel is still open, so I am always in contact with my 15 employees in case of an emergency. But women are very well organized, which helps us optimize our time and accomplish our tasks. Of course, we may stumble, but we fight and never give up because we have strong personalities and hospitality is in our blood!

What would be your biggest achievement since you started working for Campanile?

That would be receiving the first-place award in 2017 in the Mystery Guest Programme with an overall score of 100%! This is a contest in which management sends us a fake customer to measure our quality of reception and service. It's a great achievement not only for me but also for my staff, and I am very proud of this achievement and of them. I also played a role in upgrading our hotel to three stars. It's the third hotel in which I worked to receive this reward. It is a big personal achievement!

What advice would you give to women who are interested in working in the hotel business? And what memories can you share with them?

First, do not forget about yourself, and follow your dreams. Working in the hospitality industry is a passion. You have to love what you do. This job is demanding but it also gives you a lot of satisfaction and wonderful memories. For example, when I was a receptionist, guests from England read my name on my badge and started to sing the song "Joanna"! And one time I received a holiday postcard from guests who remembered me. It was really touching!