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“Struggling hotel chain hires young consultant as CMO – Leads ‘impossible’ transformation for 2010 World Cup”

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The 2010 World Cup attracted these top foreign hotels like a magnet. Mercury had to invest heavily to trump the foreign invaders – or else sell out to a competitor.

- **Catapulted to Top Leadership:** At age 33, started as consultant. Hired as CMO and then promoted to newly created role as CMO + Acting COO. Ran rebranding project plus all marketing and operations for 40 hotels in 8 countries.
- **Met Tight Deadline:** Completed the turnaround for World Cup on schedule. Investors doubled their money and Mercury emerged as an elite hotel brand.
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CEO, MARKETER, AND COMPANY TRANSFORMER Customer Experience (CX) • Customer Service (CS)

- **Finally Figured It All Out:** After 20+ years driving CS & CX projects – case studies and hands-on trial-and-error – discovered how to transform the culture of any massive company.
- **Simple Insights:** First, win buy-in from front-line staff. Energetically realign CRM, metrics, and technology. Finally, beat the drum to unify brand message – inside & outside the company.
- **Marketing Technologies:** Subject matter expert for CRM and process redesign.
- **Innovation Guru:** Earned numerous CX and CS awards – keynote speaker at top industry conferences – often quoted in financial media.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Hospitality / CX Transformation / CRM Systems / Training / Change Management / RefPAR & ADR / Turnarounds / Brand Equity

MERCURY RESORT HOTELS LTD (MRH:JSE), Various Locations Worldwide

2007–Present

Resort hotel chain with 40+ properties in 8 countries in Africa, Australia, and South America • 21,000 employees

CEO of Mercury-Westin and All Joint Ventures (2011–Present)

Chief Marketing Officer and Acting COO, Mercury Resort Hotels (2008–2011)

Chief Marketing Officer, Mercury Resort Hotels (2008)

Consultant (2007)

CEO OF MERCURY-WESTIN AND ALL JOINT VENTURES DURING 2011–PRESENT

After five years of round-the-clock implementation and transformation for MRH – as CMO and Acting COO – joined the corporate board and launched Mercury-Westin Joint Ventures. Continually assess potential acquisitions to grow the MRH portfolio. Explore complementary businesses such as upscale restaurant chains, safari resorts, and Disney-style theme parks.

- **MRH Portfolio:** Within four years, grew MRH into one of the world’s leading hotel groups: Led due diligence, financial planning, and formed investor groups. Identified 20+ acquisitions and acquired nine, including Queen Victoria and Table Bay Hotels.
- **Mercury-Westin:** Orchestrated creation of thriving JV agreements with Starwood / Westin / Arabella Starwood. Rebuilt Westin Cape Town and 24 hotels in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Balearic Islands, South Africa, Australia, Argentina, and Chile.

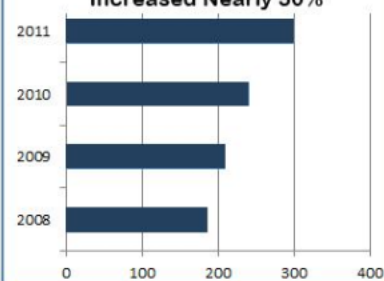
CONSULTANT, CMO, AND ACTING COO DURING 2007–2011: TRANSFORMATION AND CONSOLIDATION

During 1997–2006, MRH touted a “modestly upscale brand” – good but not great – until 2007, as emergence of the World Cup shattered the sleepy status quo. Led \$70M project that transformed MRH into South Africa’s #1 hospitality destination.

SNAPSHOT-DASHBOARD SUMMARY OF MRH TRANSFORMATION

	2008	2009	2010	2011
RevPAR (€)	140	154	170	189
Occupancy (%)	60%	64%	77%	84%
C-SAT (1-100)	79	82	86	89

Average Daily Rate (€) Increased Nearly 50%



ACTIONS AND RESULTS FOR TRANSFORMATION OF MERCURY RESORT HOTELS

- **Earned buy-in from 14,000 unionized, front-line employees:** Created a highly motivated team. Put everybody on the same page and communicated, “what’s in it for us” via nonstop dialog, communication, and multimedia coaching methods.
 - ✓ Launched a \$2.3M morale-boosting initiative, which revitalized pride among all 21,000 management and staff.
 - ✓ Achieved group-wide consistency and instilled standards of excellence across 40+ resort properties.
 - ✓ Produced Hollywood-style “soap opera” comedies starring actual employees – a \$3M project – entertaining and highly instructive.
- **Transformed the management-employee relationship:** Created multimedia tools for middle management – video clips and flash presentations – that infused managers with the gold standard for boosting morale, communicating clearly, and defining expectations.
 - ✓ Created award-winning music videos that resonated with employees who work in the most remote areas. As coaching progressed, the “lower tier” staff exceeded all expectations – especially for management of an extremely demanding clientele from EU and USA.
- **Achieved ranking as South Africa’s #1 hospitality brand:** Repositioned MRH as a luxury brand – an \$18.4M project for media alone – featuring South Africa’s top movie and sports stars. New campaigns promised an unforgettable MRH customer experience, above and beyond facilities.
- **Implemented latest IT:** Replaced antiquated legacy system with Oracle CRM and customer experience (CX) technology – a \$9M project – starting with top-to-bottom reengineering of business processes (BPR) and intense “change management” programs. Integrated isolated IT systems for casinos, hotels, and catering.
 - ✓ New system dramatically cut losses from pilferage and theft, which increased EBITDA 20% – and shocked MRH’s top management.
 - ✓ Improved marketing effectiveness by implementing a campaign management system that consolidated marketing activities for all MRH gaming properties.
 - ✓ Concurrently implemented a “single view of the customer” for 2,500 front-line touch points, which provided immediate and appropriate customer service (works in conjunction with the contact center).
- **Created a “near Disney” family experience:** Made customer experience the top priority. Catered to various segments such as business, tourist, and family. Broke through the existing “silo mentality” and focused all employees on delivery of a great customer experience.
 - ✓ Continually improved service and market competitiveness by tracking five metrics: RevPAR (revenue per average room), C-SAT (customer satisfaction), NPS (net promoter score), ADR (average daily rate), and occupancy (percentage).
 - ✓ Launched a Voice of the Guest, which used all available channels such as email, mobile, web, social media, and mystery shopping.

KPMG CONSULTING, Johannesburg, South Africa

1997–2007

Director and Lead Consultant

Promoted five times during ten years at KPMG. Solved chronic problems for diverse industries such as telecom, healthcare, airlines, and financial services. Literally “wrote the book” for KPMG regarding transformation of customer service.

- **Established lucrative consulting practice:** consolidated all CX, CS, and enterprise transformation as a distinct – and highly lucrative – practice area for KPMG (2005–2007). Personally sold the concept to Daimler Chrysler and Liberty Life Insurance (anchor clients for the new practice).
- **Grew KPMG South Africa:** Ranked #1 for business development in Johannesburg Office (2002–2005): Acquired many new clients for CX-transformational projects. Led business development, creation of consulting-and-training tools, QA, and internal coaching for consultants.
- **Recruited major client, Mercury Resort Hotels (2002–2007):** Built one of the single most important clients for KPMG – starting from scratch – established a mutually beneficial relationship that continues to the present.
- **For Nissan Europe, project managed a new CRM Strategy:** Based on reputation as SME for CRM systems, quadrupled the scope of the initial engagement to include items such as roadmap, strategic measurement framework, and change management. Analyzed breakdowns in call centers, which led to an operational benchmarking study for seven sites across EU and USA.
- **Developed business case for First National Bank (FNB):** gathered requirements and modeled the business case for an integrated sales and service platform. Expanded the engagement into business intelligence, database mining, and implementation of a new CRM.

EDUCATION

M.Com (Master’s Degree in Commerce), UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

B.Com (Bachelor’s degree in Marketing), UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

NOTES FOR HOSPITALITY RESUME:

Kayla rocketed from Consultant to CEO of a large hotel chain at age 33. She led a complete transformation of Mercury Resort Hotels, which started losing market share in 2007. Luxury brand competitors – from USA and EU – opened new hotels to exploit an inevitable wave of tourism during and after the 2010 World Cup.

Mercury Resort Hotels faced a choice – either transform to world-class or sell out competitors. Kayla stepped into the spotlight and drove an incredibly successful, five-year transformation that led to her promotions as COO and, later, CEO.

For resume purposes, the difficulty here is timing: The most exciting years of her career happened during 2007–2011, which, chronologically, look like ancient history. Her most recent four years look less interesting – routine M&A and due diligence.

Solution: Right at the very top, we introduce a success story that looks like a news article. This “news story” gambit – fits well with the conventions of standard resume writing. The news story that emerged after many trial-and-error attempts to showcase her story in a natural way.

This “branded story” intro does not work for everybody. It works best for somebody with a great success story – no matter how old.

BRANDING AND LINKEDIN PROFILE:

A success story brands her more effectively than a mish-mash of adjectives. In addition to the resume, this story works perfectly well as the summary paragraph for her LinkedIn profile – everything in sync.

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