

SEPTEMBER 2026

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UNLOCK. EXPLORE. BUILD.

It is the seventh edition of **Hotel Expo Nigeria, HEN**, and everything that it has supposedly achieved, and will continue to achieve, everything that it has enjoyed and still will enjoy, have all been built on the hard work of those who have lived out dreams, many of which were born by sheer determination and resilience. Many do not have our opportunities nor our choices, but they found a way to make things work.

This year's theme, '**Unlock, Explore, Build**,' inspires us to see beyond the conventional and knock on the doors of untapped opportunity, howbeit impossible; traverse untrodden paths despite the undulating terrain; and, build formidable alliances in meaningful directions for success. Information and knowledge sharing are sine quo non to remaining relevant in a dynamic and challenging world. We must all contribute to the growth of the industry in whatever capacity we deem fit.

This year's theme, 'Unlock, Explore, Build,' inspires us to see beyond the conventional and knock on the doors of untapped opportunity.



HEN continues to be the platform for intentional connections and networking, translating opportunities into value. Replacing the regular panel sessions are "Talk Sessions," a format featuring short and highly engaging, single-focus presentations on a topic with proffered solutions and, the introduction of the Networking Roundtable, is in continuity of the vision to place greater emphasis on actionable conversations, foster business relationships, and harness solutions capable of shaping and reshaping the next phase of Nigeria's hospitality industry.

Our schedule of events, reputable organizations on the show floor, trade conversations, international delegates, key highlights, promises to be engaging, informative, educating, and entertaining with B2C remaining a major part of the event.

Thank you for the support in all the forms they have come, and for continued patronage. We would like to serve you better and welcome all feedbacks.

It is our pleasure to welcome all to HEN 2026!

Joe Hanson
Founder, Convener



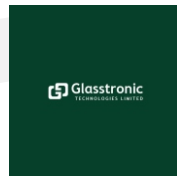
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UNLOCK SESSION - STARTUP

DAY 1 - MORNING

LET'S UNLOCK AND EXPLORE TOGETHER!

Convener/founder- Joe Hanson

OWNING A HOSPITALITY BUSINESS; SETTING UP

Princess Adeyinka Tekenah

Owner, Happy Coffee, Global Coffee Expert & Advocate

OWNING A HOSPITALITY BUSINESS; PARTNERSHIPS

Millie Slade

Co-founder, Jara Beach Resort & Lufasi Lodges

PRODUCT DESIGN 1

REDEFINING YOUR HOSPITALITY SPACE

Nkiruka Ajah - CEO/Founder CNM

OWNING A HOSPITALITY BUSINESS; STAFFING

Salome Danjuma

Food, Beverage And Spa Manager, The Wheatbaker Hotel

WHY YOUR HOSPITALITY BUSINESS NEEDS A TRUSTED BRAND COMMUNICATION

Jide Sipe

President, Association Of Corporate Communications And Marketing Professionals In Banks (ACAMB)

EXCLUSIVE NETWORK PARTNERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

1:10PM - 1:40PM

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BEDMAKING COMPETITION

1:30PM - 2PM



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UNLOCK SESSION - STARTUP

DAY 1- AFTERNOON

2:35PM

BUILDING SESSION!

INSIDE THE CONSTRUCTION WORLD - GLASSTRONIC TECH LTD

*Osedebame Martins – Okoruwa
Head, Legal & Compliance*

IS FRANCHISE HOTELING DYING SOON?

*Dami Adepaju
Senior Director, Lodging Development – West Africa, Marriott International*

BUSINESS TRAVEL PARTNERSHIPS: WHAT OWNERS ARE DOING TODAY!

*Moyo Ogunsiende
Group CEO Of Club Concierge International And GotravelCC*

PRODUCT DESIGN 2

*Fortune Okeke
MD/CEO, Homefairy Technologies Ltd*

WHAT YOU NEED TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TODAY

*Kofi Abunu
MD/CEO, Food Concepts Plc*

CAPACITY BUILDING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

*Toni Ukachukwu
CEO, Aviators Magazine*

WHAT HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE NEW TAX LAWS

*Dr. Titilayo Fowokan, FCA FCTI
Principal Consultant, FTE Consulting & Deputy VP, Chartered Institute Of Taxation Of Nigeria*

Ready For

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY'S FINEST SPEAKERS FOR DAY 1?



LANDMARK EVENT
CENTRE



SEPT 28TH 2026



11:15AM



**TONI
UKACHUKWU**

CEO,
AVIATORS MAGAZINE.



**MILLIE
SLADE**

CO-FOUNDER,
JARA BEACH RESORT & LUFASI
LODGES.



**MOYO
OGUNSEINDE**

GROUP CEO OF THE CLUB
CONCIERGE INTERNATIONAL AND
GOTRAVELOC.



**DAMI
ADEPOJU**

SENIOR DIRECTOR,
LODGING DEVELOPMENT - WEST
AFRICA, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL.

- SPEAKERS -



**SALOME
DANJUMA**

FOOD, BEVERAGE AND SPA
MANAGER, THE WHEATBAKER
HOTEL.



**KOFI
ABUNU**

MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CHIEF
EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF FOOD,
CONCEPTS PLC.



**JIDE
SIPE**

PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND
MARKETING PROFESSIONALS IN
BANKS (ACAMB).



**PRINCESS
ADEYINKA
TEKENAH**

OWNER,
HAPPY COFFEE, GLOBAL COFFEE
EXPERT & ADVOCATE.



**DR.
TITILAYO
FOWOKAN**

FCA, FCTI
PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT, FTE CONSULTING
& DEPUTY VICE PRESIDENT, CHARTERED
INSTITUTION OF TAXATION OF NIGERIA.



PRESENTS

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STARTING A NEW HOSPITALITY BUSINESS

It can seem appealing to start a coffee business in Nigeria, but the biggest obstacles are not so much related to coffee as they are to costs, infrastructure, consumer purchasing power, supply chains, and creating a market for high-quality coffee.

HEN's Co-founder, Michael Yanai, had a chat with Princess Adeyinka Tekenah regarding starting up a business in the hospitality space and it was worth every bit of it!

Q: You started in 2015 with \$5,000 from Tony Elumelu Foundation after reading the Starbucks story in college. What did set-up really look like in Year 1 when there was no data, no database, no value chain for Nigerian coffee?

A: There was actually no set up in Year one. \$5000 was ₦1,012,000 in 2015. It was enough to get the idea going. It afforded me some coffee equipment, shelves and a travel ticket to America to buy some coffee items. That's all I had in Year one.

Q: You went mobile first, then pop-up in 2017, then two experience centres. Why is that phased set-up smarter for hospitality founders than looking for big capital to build a flagship on day one?

A: It provides a better chance to solve small challenges as you build. The margin of error is manageable at a smaller scale.

Q: You source Arabica from women farmers on the Mambilla Plateau, Taraba and roast in Lagos. How do you set up a reliable supply chain when you are dealing with 22 coffee-growing states and an informal farm system?

A: Literally defying all odds by putting our eggs in one basket. We have been dealing with 1 producer from time to time. Learning how to build trust has also been viable. At a time, I had to visit the Mambilla Plateau in Taraba State to meet with our producer and farmers. We found our own way in this informal setup and we are building block by block.



*Founder of **Happy Coffee**, Nigeria's leading indigenous seed-to-cup brand and convener of Lagos Coffee Festival. A Tony Elumelu alumna and First National President of Women in Coffee and Vice President, Gender Committee for Women in Coffee, Africa who pioneers sustainable value chains from Mambilla farmers to major experience centres in Lagos.*

Q: You pioneered the Lagos Coffee Festival in 2019. How much of setting up a hospitality business is actually about setting up the market and educating the customers?

A: Depending on your sectors, both variables can co-exist. For coffee, both facts have to happen concurrently. We are quite behind in the development of coffee systems in Nigeria; hence, we literally have to set up markets and educate customers at the same time to be relevant.

Q: For someone who wants to open a café, restaurant or small hotel – what is the realistic capital, timeline and breakeven they should plan for in Lagos today?

A: Lol. Trick question. I have no numbers to share except I know the size of your coffee dream.

Q: What mistakes do people make while venturing into the business of hospitality; and what is your step-by-step checklist for anyone considering starting tomorrow morning?

A: People make too many assumptions about the business, too many hearsays. To start, the first and only thing I say, find out about your value chain and decide what problem you want to solve.

It provides a better chance to solve small challenges as you build. The margin of error is manageable at a smaller scale.

PEOPLE. RELATIONSHIP. MENTORSHIP.

Business relationships can be a delicate balancing act, especially when your personal style differs from your company's core vision. To succeed, a start-up must cultivate a prudent and professional identity — one firmly rooted in Respect and Integrity.

- Princess Adeyinka Tekenah

Ready For

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY'S FINEST SPEAKERS FOR DAY 2?



LANDMARK EVENT
CENTRE



SEPT 29TH 2026



12:00PM

- SPEAKERS -



**TREVOR
WARD**

MD,
W-HOSPITALITY GROUP



**BRUCE
PRINS**

AUTHOR,
STRATEGIST AND
HOSPITALITY EXPERT.



**UTIBE
BASSEY**

GM,
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT &
STRATEGY, CRUXSTONE
GROUP.



**ONYINYE
OKONJI**

CEO, BEDROCK GROUP

EXPLORING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN AFRICA'S HOTEL SPACE

Trevor Ward
MD, W-Hospitality Group

UNDERSTANDING GUEST PSYCHOLOGY IN HOSPITALITY BUSINESS

Bruce Prins
Author, Strategist, Hospitality Expert

PRODUCT DESIGN 3

Daniel Omerigwe
MD Current-Link Hospitality Systems Ltd

**RESTRUCTURING AFRICA'S TOURISM: BEYOND "DETTY DECEMBER" —
THE LAGOS OPPORTUNITY**

Utibe Bassey
GM, Business Development & Strategy, Cruxstone Group

MANAGING SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS

Onyinye Okonji
CEO, Bedrock Group

HOSPITALITY NETWORKING ROUNDTABLE 1:45PM - 2: 30PM

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AFTERNOON

HEN MASTERCLASS | 3:15PM

REVENUE RESCUE: OPTIMIZING PROFIT WITHOUT DISCOUNTING

Sunday Omogoye Sampson
Ebonylife Place (White Orchid Hotel) - Hotel Manager

BEDMAKING COMPETITION FINALE | 4PM



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STAFFING!

GETTING THE RIGHT TEAM

Due to the challenging combination of high employee turnover, demanding working conditions, skills gaps, relatively narrow margins, and fierce rivalry for dependable personnel, staffing is a major pain point in Nigerian hospitality.

Michael Yanai, Co-founder, Hotel Expo Nigeria, engages Salome on a subject that's always piqued his interest with a few questions:

Q: What is the true cost of bad staffing in F&B and Spa – from wastage and guest complaints to reviews; and how can one spot the right person beyond a CV?

A: A bad hire can cost you much more than salary. It can cost you wastage, guest recovery, repeat business and, ultimately, your reputation.

We are in the business of trust, and I constantly remind my team that F&B and Spa are particularly intimate service offerings. We feed people. We serve them. Our therapists are sometimes alone with guests in treatment rooms. These are positions that require skill, certainly, but also judgement, integrity, emotional intelligence and genuine care.

That is why I look beyond the CV. Skills can often be taught. I pay attention to how someone communicates, how they treat people they do not need to impress, whether they listen, and whether they naturally demonstrate care. You are not simply hiring someone to perform a task; you are trusting them with your guest and your reputation.

Q: The Wheatbaker is known for keeping staff for 10+ years. What is your retention formula for waiters, bartenders, therapists and chefs in a market where everyone is poaching?

A: There is a saying in our industry: take care of your staff and they will take care of your guests. We take that seriously. We invest heavily in our people through training and development, but we also try to make them partners in the success of the business. One example is service charge. When employees understand that as the business performs better, they can also benefit, there is a stronger connection between individual effort, guest satisfaction and commercial performance.



*Driving The Wheatbaker's F&B and wellness experience as it marks 15 years, **Salome Danjuma** leads restaurants, bar and spa operations. She recently steered service through the hotel's renovation while open, championing its evolution as a destination for African luxury, wellness and youth development.*

But retention is not only about money. People want to feel valued. They want to know that their contribution matters, that there is an opportunity to grow and that the organisation sees them as more than labour. People stay where they can see a future for themselves.

Q: Does The Wheatbaker Hotel own SOPs for every staff? How are these transferable into everyday habits of service?

A: Absolutely. We believe strongly in SOPs because it is difficult to hold someone accountable to a standard that was never clearly established in the first place. It tells the employee what the business expects and, importantly, what the guest should consistently experience.

We have SOPs covering even seemingly small details. We even have an SOP on smiling. That may sound excessive until you remember that luxury is often communicated through very small behaviours.

But writing an SOP is not enough. It has to become habit. That is why we continuously train and retrain our SOPs, including through weekly training.

Repetition reinforces learning until the standard stops feeling like an instruction and simply becomes the way we work.

Q: Your team stayed open and delivered service during a full hotel renovation. How did you keep morale, standards and staffing levels up during that period?

A: I would love to say it has been completely glitch-free, but it hasn't and that experience has taught both myself and the team, to become much quicker on our feet.

We have had to adapt constantly and sometimes very quickly. What has helped enormously is keeping the vision in front of the team. People cope with inconvenience differently when they understand what it is building towards.

The disruption we experience today is temporary and we are creating something better. We talk about where we are going, not only what is difficult today. This has created excitement and not simply enduring a renovation; we are watching the next chapter of the hotel take shape and recognising that we all are part of building it.

Q: What collaboration would you propose to service providers, training schools and suppliers to improve the talent pipeline in Nigeria?

A: Bring industry practitioners into the classroom. When I was in hotel school, many of my lecturers had actually worked in hotels. They weren't teaching hotel management as an abstract concept; they understood what happened when a guest arrived late, when a restaurant was full, when equipment failed or when an operation had to make money. That exposure matters.

I would like to see stronger partnerships between schools and operators, with industry professionals helping to shape curricula, teach practical sessions, mentor students and create meaningful internships. We need less of a divide between what students learn in the classroom and what they encounter on their first day in a hotel. The industry itself has a responsibility to help schools produce graduates who are genuinely industry-ready.

Q: What is your golden caveat to any hotel owner, new restaurant, bar or spa owner or GM when it comes to staffing?

A: Never be unkind. You can demand excellence. You can have extremely high standards. You can correct poor performance and hold people accountable. None of those things requires you to strip someone of their dignity. Treat people with dignity and respect.

We talk so much about creating extraordinary experiences for guests, but the people expected to deliver those experiences deserve humanity too. If I had to leave an owner or GM with one principle, it would be this: high standards and human dignity are not opposites. You should insist on both.

There is a saying in our industry: take care of your staff and they will take care of your guests. We take that seriously.



PEOPLE. RELATIONSHIPS. MENTORSHIP.

I am very much a product of the people I have encountered along the way. Some have taught me what to do, others have taught me what not to do, and both have been equally valuable.

I have been fortunate to work with people who saw something in me before I necessarily saw it in myself. Mentors and leaders who gave me opportunities, challenged me, corrected me and, importantly, trusted me with responsibility. That trust has shaped the way I lead today. Relationships have also taught me that people rarely remember only what you said or what you achieved; they remember how they experienced you. I think that is partly why dignity has become such an important part of my leadership philosophy.

I have also learnt not to try to become a replica of the people I admire. I take lessons from them, but I remain myself. Self-governance and finding your own expression are important. I think exposure is such an underrated form of learning. You become more of what you are exposed to. Sometimes you don't even know what is possible until you see someone else doing it, enter a different environment, experience a different standard or simply find yourself in a room you have never been in before.

I am still being moulded. I don't think leadership ever reaches a point where you can say, "I have arrived." People continue to teach me, including the people I lead. There is always something to improve upon, and having a philosophy of self-improvement and continuous learning has been most valuable.

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WHY PARTNERSHIPS WILL HELP YOUR BUSINESS

Because the hospitality industry depends on personnel, distribution, visibility, suppliers, and consumer traffic—resources that are challenging and costly to develop independently—partnerships can be especially beneficial.

Millie Slade shares insights on her stance with forging strategic business partnerships in the hospitality space with Michael Yanai.

Q: You and Mark built Jara as a husband-and-wife team with 30+ years combined experience. What makes a business partnership work when you are also partners in life?

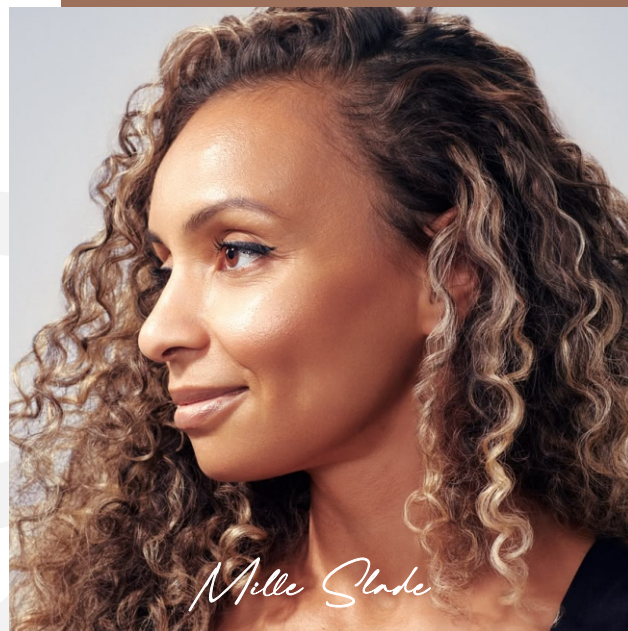
A: I believe that what has worked for us is a shared vision that got us started and shared values that has kept us going. We are all about creating memorable and unique experiences for individuals and families and that's what keeps us motivated. But we are also very different people, and I think that helps. We bring a different skill set to the table and we challenge each other in a way that brings out the best of us both.

Q: You started Jara Beach in 2019 with your savings and family support rather than big investors. What should every first-time hospitality owner know about choosing the right financial partner?

A: I think that people need to look beyond glossy resumes and big promises. Ask a potential partner about their values and see if you align. And personally, I'd invite them for launch and see how they treat the waiter or waitress. It tells me a lot about their true character.

Q: You kept your team on site during COVID just 3 months after opening. What role did partnerships – with staff, suppliers, and your community in Museyo – play in surviving that period?

A: We take our responsibility as employers very seriously. COVID was a big test for us very early on but we knew that we had something special and so did our team and partners thus we didn't slow down on communication and preparation for reopening. That helped a lot to keep everyone's morale up including ours.



*Co-founder of Little Company Nigeria Limited with husband Mark, **Millie** brings 30+ years combined hospitality experience. From their award-winning all-inclusive Jara Beach Resort in Eleko to 6 new eco-lodges inside the LUFASI Nature Park, she is building a family business starting small with big ambitions.*

We didn't want to let our staff go so we continued paying half of their salaries even when we couldn't really afford it. Our suppliers were also supportive and patient during those trying times. And the relationship with the community has always been very important to our business. Many of our staff members come from Museyo and that positive relationship has created a safe and secure environment for Jara Beach Resort over the years. Those early challenges really gave us the confidence that we can overcome anything with a right mindset and good people on our team.

Q: What are the red flags you have learned to watch before signing a hospitality partnership in Nigeria?

A: The biggest red flag for me is misalignment of values. Imagine going into partnership with someone that only cares about money and not caring much about integrity. If the values don't align, I don't care about how attractive the numbers look, it's not the right partnership for me. Another thing I'd look at closely is how potential partners communicate when things don't go as planned. I've learnt to listen to my gut and not rush into a partnership. Patience has saved us from a lot of potentially catastrophic partnerships.

Q: For someone who has a great location but no hospitality experience, or a great experience but no location – what is your practical guide to finding and vetting the right partner?

A: I think that hospitality in itself is all about people and human connection so you don't necessarily need a lot of hospitality experience. If you have a great location, the next step is to put together a competent team. If you have the right experience but no location then be patient in finding partners that can provide that. There are honestly a lot more opportunities in Nigeria than people realise. Beautiful properties don't automatically make a successful hospitality business. You need to be prepared to do the work required and you need people who understand service. If you don't have a heart for service and the discipline to be consistent, then hospitality is not for you.

Q: Looking back from Jara Beach to Lufasi Lodges, what would you do differently about partnerships if you were starting again today?

A: Honestly, I wouldn't change a thing. If I did, we probably wouldn't be here today. It hasn't been smooth sailing but having my husband as a partner has truly been the best part of the journey. Jara happened at the right time, and we had a couple of ideas afterwards including a restaurant which we decided to close. It wasn't the right thing for us to do at the time. And then a couple of years later, a brand-new concept of Lufasi Lodges glamping was born. We instantly knew that it was right for us. We have had a lot of opportunities for external partnerships and investment along the way but we are yet to find the right fit. And until then there is nothing like knowing we have the final say on all decisions.

If we were starting all over again today, I'd definitely trust myself more and follow my instincts without second-guessing myself so much. Sometimes you just have to trust the journey.

The biggest red flag for me is misalignment of values.

Imagine going into partnership with someone that only cares about money and not caring much about integrity.



PEOPLE. RELATIONSHIPS. MENTORSHIP.

I started working at an early age and spent many years in aviation, a career I absolutely loved. Working with people from different countries, cultures and backgrounds made me open-minded and adaptable, taught me to work under pressure and, most importantly, to connect with people. I learned that you can learn something from everyone if you are willing to listen. Everything is about relationships, and hospitality is ultimately about human connection.

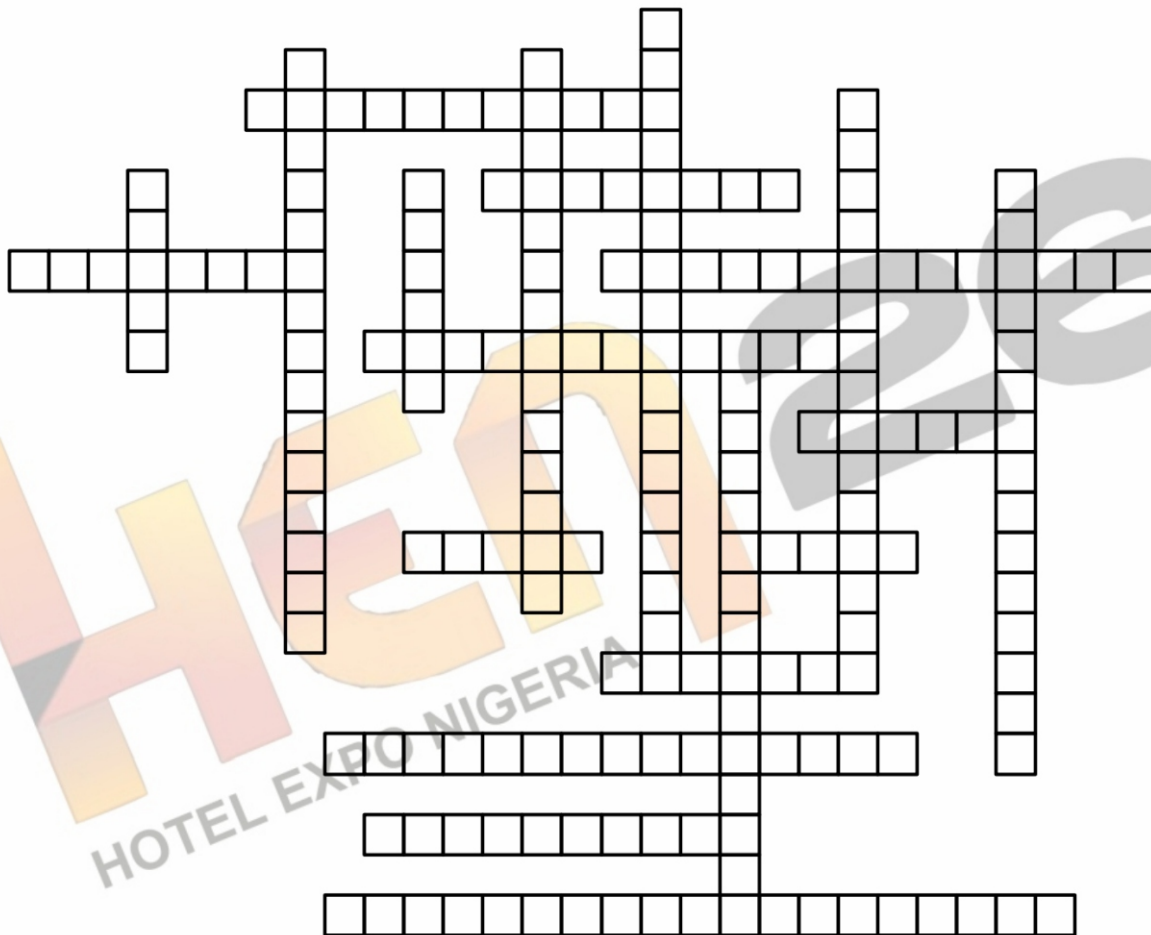
I was fortunate to spend my final few years working with a former boss who became a mentor and inspiration to me, probably without even knowing it. He treated me with genuine respect and kindness, and when he honoured my invitation to my wedding, it was one of the greatest compliments he could have given me.

His advice that “not every business needs to scale” has stayed with me. We’ve put that into practice with Jara and Lufasi, deliberately choosing to stay boutique so we can protect what makes the guest experience special.

They say who you marry is either the best or the worst decision you will ever make, and I’m lucky enough to say that marrying my husband has been the best decision of my life. Our relationship has been a huge pillar of support and growth. We’ve grown together, challenged each other and built our businesses side by side.

That partnership, along with the relationships I’ve formed throughout my career, has shaped so much of who I am today.

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM



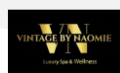
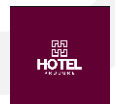
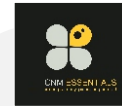
ACROSS

4. booklet with information about particular place to visit
8. best quality
10. period time for rest and is free from daily obligations
11. business that physically moves people from one place to another.
12. The practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation
14. a journey on a ship to a number of destinations
15. an establishment providing accommodations, meals, and other services for travelers and tourists.
16. stay while they are on the road
17. an available room in hotel, motel. etc
18. A technique that is used in counseling, training, and solving disputes or conflicts.
19. express the meaning of (the writer or speaker or something written or spoken) using different words, especially to achieve greater clarity.
20. a business that has only one location and one unit.

Down

1. travel done for rest and relaxation
2. that you ask to gain greater insight into what someone has just told
3. travel people do as part of their jobs
5. a business that provides overnight accommodations
6. a type of language that consists of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people.
7. is the language of specialized terms used by a group or profession
9. total customer experience with business
13. the day to day running of a hotel

VENDORS





NOTES

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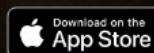
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