

## Power Strategies in Times of Covid

**The effects of the Corona pandemic have had the entire hotel industry firmly in their grip for almost a year now. Even the approximately 270 individual hotels under the roof of BWH Hotel Group Central Europe have not been spared by the crisis. The Germany-based head office has responded with comprehensive packages of measures and a crisis strategy tailored to the hotels in order to mitigate the consequences of the crisis. Fortunately, as many as 14 new hotels joined the group in the crisis year 2020, and another six hotel projects are opening under the Best Western flag in the current year.**

**Eschborn, February 15, 2021.** "After almost a year in crisis mode, it is time to draw an interim conclusion: As deplorable as the overall situation in the hotel industry remains due to the pandemic, the difficult time has also shown how powerful our group of individual hotels is and how important a joint approach and mutual support are. Looking back on 2020, there are also lessons learned, experiences, structural changes and aspects which can definitely be seen positively and which we will take with us into our future strategies," proclaim Carmen Dücker and Marcus Smola, CEOs of BWH Hotel Group Central Europe GmbH, to which around 270 hotels of the brand families Best Western Hotels & Resorts, WorldHotels and Sure Hotels in ten countries belong. The group's successful strategies in dealing with the crisis have led many hotels deciding to join the BWH Hotel Group brands even in the crisis year of 2020. Last year a total of 14 new hotels with more than 1,400 rooms decided for a partnership with BWH Hotel Group Central Europe. Six additional hotel projects in Austria, Switzerland and Germany will open during 2021 and will complement the group's portfolio.

### **Successful crisis management and power strategies**

Immediately with the start of the Corona crisis in March 2020, the Eschborn headquarters of BWH Hotel Group Central Europe initiated a comprehensive package of measures for its affiliated partner hotels and gave the crisis top priority in all areas. "As a service provider for hotels, we have supported our hotel partners during these difficult times with all the means at our disposal - advising on all operational matters, helping with communication measures, marketing and sales issues, offering financial support, as well as sharing important information and best practices with each other. And we have been trying to get through this crisis together as a strong community ever since," says Smola. Financial support through contribution reduction, digitalization in many areas, expansion of communication, assistance with hygiene concepts, lockdown and restart support reservation management, restart concepts, home office concepts, hybrid meeting offers, new and adapted marketing strategies – it is a long list of initiatives launched for the partner hotels. Also, the group's hotel development has not taken a back seat during this time; instead, the focus has been on growth in order to expand the brand's significance. "Only together we are strong - especially in these difficult times it has been shown that it is an advantage to master the crisis together in an association. Exactly those things have been confirmed that form the core of our group and that clearly demonstrate the cooperative spirit of the BWH Hotel Group: We stand closely together in this crisis, we help each other, think of others and are stronger together. We are convinced that we will maintain many of the successful strategies we have introduced in the future and thus emerge from the crisis stronger together," says Smola.

### **Into the future with innovation, flexibility and speed**

"Of course, we are still in a tight situation in the hotel industry. This makes it all the more important to focus on creativity and flexibility. It's about speed, changing, developing new ideas and seizing opportunities wherever we can. We develop suitable innovative products, explore alternative target groups and thus also set the

course for successful future marketing. Instead of remaining in a state of shock, the crisis has taught us to become even faster, to courageously try out new things and to give even higher priority to permanent change in our strategies," adds Dücker. In doing so, the group's measures are tailored as individually as possible to the needs of the single properties. "Even as a global brand, we have never lost our connection and identification with the regions and cities where our hotels are located. This is now benefiting us in the increased importance of local marketing opportunities. But digital concepts have also received another real boost in our group," Dücker summarizes the learnings from the crisis. "It was and is important to recognize the needs of travelers precisely and to use this to create successful marketing opportunities for our hoteliers and businesses. This succeeds in the regular exchange with our customers and partners, the passing on of these findings to our hotel partners and thus always having an open ear for the hoteliers. In this way, we were able to tailor our assistance and support to the respective hotels and markets," says Dücker.

## Top measures taken by BWH Hotel Group in Corona crisis

- 1. Maintaining contact with employees in short-time work:** introducing regular communication with employees for information, appreciation and maintaining contact. Show transparency and build trust.
- 2. Cost saving measures:** Immediate realization of relevant savings, including reduced working hours, suspend and postpone inappropriate marketing activities during lockdown periods, reduction of travel expenses, reduced capital expenditures.
- 3. Financial support for hotels:** waiver and deferral of fees as a clear "helping signal", assistance in securing liquidity at hotel level.
- 4. Communication, information, personal support:** up-to-date preparation of relevant information with assistance for hotels (templates, help with applications, safety and hygiene tips, industry information, legal regulations, recommendations for action in the event of hotel closure and reopening). Complementary permanent accessibility, emotional support and reinforcement.
- 5. Hygiene concepts:** creation of templates, flyers, posters, materials related to safety and hygiene measures in the hotel. Launch online store with safety and hygiene items. Communication of all safety and hygiene measures on hotel level visible online on homepage.
- 6. Virtual events, meetings, workshops and online training offers:** implementation of virtual meetings and webinars for hotel employees. Providing advice, tips and assistance to and with hoteliers and staff among themselves. Expansion of internal online training measures. Hosting various virtual customer events with connection and networking opportunities for hoteliers.
- 7. Lockdown support reservation management:** consulting, coordination and direct assistance in handling all operational reservation matters (cancellations, rebookings, guest communication) for hotels in lockdown phases.

**8. Press and PR work:** active and transparent communication with the outside world, "mouthpiece function" for hotels, raising concerns and demands, continuous addressing politics on relevant issues.

**9. Managing and adapting cooperation with distribution partners:** Evaluation of cooperation with distribution partners, necessary (re-)negotiations and adjustment of conditions and framework agreements for meaningful continuation of partnerships.

**10. Adapt marketing strategies, programs and marketing campaigns:** launch new products and marketing activities for Leisure, Corporate and MICE across all distribution and communication channels. Examples: "Hidden Places" campaign (marketing domestic vacation destinations), "Picnic by Best Western" offers in hotels, local marketing offers in the Corporate segment, special conditions for local small and medium-sized companies, hybrid meeting offers, home office in the hotel, schooling in the hotel, etc.... Relaunch of Best Western website for even more flexibility in the presentation of offers and information, also individually per hotel.

**11. Ready for restart:** development of new, innovative products for marketing, digital guest services in hotels, techniques for enhancing travel security etc. in order to be ready and adapted to changing needs and travel behavior of customers and guests at the time of the "travel start".

**12. Expansion of brand significance and hotel development:** Growth of portfolio and focus on targeted hotel expansion in attractive locations with the group's various brands. Addition of 14 hotels in 2020.

**The following press picture is available for download:**

*Caption: BWH Hotel Group Central Europe GmbH accompanies its affiliated hotels through the Corona crisis with comprehensive packages of measures and incorporates many lessons learned from the crisis into future strategies. In the picture: Carmen Dücker and Marcus Smola, CEOs of the hotel group based in Eschborn / Germany.*

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### **About BWH Hotel Group<sup>SM</sup>:**

*The BWH Hotel Group<sup>SM</sup> is an international hotel group headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona, and the umbrella brand for the three global brand families including Best Western Hotels & Resorts, WorldHotels Collection and SureStay Hotel Group with a global network of approximately 4,700 independent hotels in over 100 countries and territories worldwide. \* BWH Hotel Group offers a total of 18 hotel brands worldwide that suit the needs of hotel developers and guests in every market: Best Western®, Best Western Plus®, Best Western Premier®, Executive Residency by Best Western®, VÄ«b®, GL , Aiden®, Sadie®, BW Premier Collection® and BW Signature Collection® as well as WorldHotels® Luxury, WorldHotels Elite, WorldHotels Distinctive and WorldHotels Crafted. SureStay®, SureStay Plus®, SureStay Collection® and SureStay Studio<sup>SM</sup> complete the group's brand portfolio. \*\* BWH Hotel Group<sup>SM</sup> offers hoteliers operational services, sales and marketing*

support, multiple award-winning online and mobile booking options as well as the customer loyalty programs Best Western Rewards® and WorldHotels Rewards<sup>SM</sup> with more than 40 million members.

BWH Hotel Group<sup>SM</sup> Central Europe GmbH, formerly Best Western Hotels Central Europe GmbH, based in Eschborn, supports a total of around 270 hotels\* in ten countries, including Germany, Croatia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Further information: [www.bwhhotelgroup.de](http://www.bwhhotelgroup.de) [www.bestwestern.de](http://www.bestwestern.de) and [www.bestwestern.com](http://www.bestwestern.com)

\* Numbers are approximate, may fluctuate, and include hotels currently in the development pipeline.

\*\* All Best Western, WorldHotels and SureStay branded hotels are independently owned and operated. In Europe, SureStay Hotels are managed with the brand Sure Hotels.

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