

SPOTLIGHT ON ANNEKE BROWN

HOTELIER, PERTH



On her last day in one of her early roles as a travel agent in Sydney, Anneke picked up the latest copy of the Qantas luxury travel brochure featuring Amankila's iconic three-tiered infinity pool on the cover and said, laughing to her colleagues, "One day, I'm going to work there!" Just two years later she was right there working as reservation manager, and later Global director of training, for Amanresorts. She had a vision and realised it much sooner than she anticipated by taking every opportunity. Now she brings her passion for delivering exceptional service to some of WA's most elegant hotel experiences.

“ Everyone who's in hospitality is in it because they love the buzz that serving people brings. It's a wonderfully rewarding career and a hugely honourable role to play in our society. ”

Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

Working as a hotelier and a consultant on new luxury developments, it's my job to ensure all the design work in the early stages keeps the end user in mind – both the guest and the staff. From a staff perspective, every consideration must be given to the back of house details to enable staff to deliver excellence – from design of the locker room, to making sure there is efficient access to all the necessary 'tools' to perform their roles.

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

When I was growing up, we travelled quite a lot as a family and lived overseas for a bit, so I developed a passion for travel early in life. I have one very vivid childhood memory of sitting on a beach in Bali sketching a layout of a holiday resort, with a pool, tennis court, restaurant et cetera. I was around 12 at the time, so I think I'd always wanted to be in hotels and travel.

So, how did you get into tourism and hospitality?

I excelled in maths and economics at school, where the ultimate career goals were all about becoming a doctor or a lawyer. But I had my heart set on taking the top seat in hospitality and becoming a hotelier. Back then there were no bachelor-level qualifications in WA for the sector, so I got a solid grounding in business studying Commerce at UWA with a triple major in general management, marketing and business law.

After graduating, I started office doorknocking in Sydney, with bold ambitions of stepping straight into the role of marketing manager at a top hotel! But I was a graduate, with no experience, and quickly realised I was aiming too high. I got my first position as a travel agent with on-the-job training. It was high volume, low budget – the opposite to high-end luxury holidays, where I wanted to be. I lasted about 10 months but, to this day, I still use the technical skills I picked up in that role. It was the most important learning experience that got my foot in the door at Amanresorts.

How would you describe yourself?

I'm dedicated to service excellence and expect to see that in others.

But I'm an optimist and see the best in people. I can sometimes come across as a control freak, but I really value relationship building and I love engaging my team in the whole decision-making process.

What do you love most about the industry?

Everyone who's in hospitality is in it because they love the buzz that serving people brings. It's a wonderfully rewarding career and a hugely honourable role to play in our society. There are so many roles you can play within it, and we are so fortunate here in WA to have such a diverse state offering an incredible breadth and depth of experiences in hospitality.

What's the best part of your job?

Every day gets the adrenalin pumping. You never know what's going to happen in the next ten minutes. I love that. I'll never tire of it.

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

The skills you'll learn working in entry-level hospitality roles – whether you're on reception, in sales, making beds, or cooking eggs – are 100% transferable, anywhere in Australia and overseas. But they're also your springboard into a whole world of executive roles, from resort development to global acquisition management. If you love it, you can keep stepping up and stay in it for life. If you see a role that inspires you, just grab the opportunity and apply. Because every application and interview is invaluable experience.

And what's next for you?

The current hotel development project I'm working on here in WA will be my tenth project, and I sometimes think, "Have I got another international resort project in me?" But I don't feel the urge to go anywhere else because there are just so many great opportunities right here in WA.

Connect with Anneke on LinkedIn

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