

Bharat Patel

FLORIDA REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF ASIAN AMERICAN HOTEL OWNERS ASSOCIATION (AAHOA)

Bharat Patel has been working in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years. His journey began in Kentucky, with stops in Atlanta, Daytona Beach, Orlando, Gainesville and, finally, Sarasota/Bradenton. He is a proud graduate of the University of Florida.

Patel has served on several hospitality industry boards, including the CHOICE Hotels Owners Council and the Econo Lodge Franchise Association. Patel currently serves on the Sarasota Tourism Development Council, the Sheriff's Advisory Board and the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association Board of Directors. In addition to that, he is the Florida Regional Director of AAHOA — Asian American Hotel Owners Association: the largest hotel owners' association in the world.

Patel notes that he has “weathered one World’s Fair, one Olympics and Hurricanes Andrew, Charlie, Frances, Ivan and Irma.”



How did you get started in the hospitality industry?

Growing up around hard working immigrant parents, I was exposed to the true meaning of what it meant to “Live the American Dream.” My parents owned and operated their first hotel in 1982, located in Corbin, Kentucky, the home of the first Kentucky Fried Chicken in the world.

Early in your career, what was the most valuable lesson you learned? I have always lived by a mantra, which is to aim high, be the best, do what’s right, get results, have fun, go green and give back.

Do you have any mentors who were instrumental in helping you achieve your goals? My parents always have been, and will continue to be, my personal heroes. They showed me how to excel in business and life and laid the foundation for our American dream. They also taught me three important things that I will pass down to my children. First, they taught me to work hard because you can never achieve anything in life without effort. Second is to be educated because whatever path you choose in life, you have to be informed and the learning never stops. Finally, they taught me to stay out of politics which admittedly, I did not follow. Politics, for me, is a passion and a hobby. I always like to say that politics is the art of the possible.

What is the single greatest factor in the success of your career? I believe the one thing that has kept me going strong is something I like to call “grit.” It is my ability to maintain a stiff upper lip and to forever work hard and carry on.

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