



PERSONALITIES

Calderon leads

POSADAS' BIG PUSH

By DEBBIE CARLSON

Enrique Calderon Fernandez, chief operating officer of Posadas, got bit by the hospitality bug early. Now the bug has hit his employer, Mexico's largest home-grown hotel company, which is launching a major expansion with plans to develop 54 hotels in the next three years and sign 30 more management contracts each year through 2020.

For Calderon, a 35-year career has prepared him to manage the ambition plan, which would increase the number of rooms by 38%, to almost 36,000.

His uncle was the general manager at the Camino Real (now Hyatt Ziva Puerto Vallarta) and managing director at Las Hadas (now Las Brisas) in Manzanillo, Mexico, in the late 1970s. "I had the opportunity to spend my summer vacations with him and learn... It was more glamorous than the business is today, but that's what really inspired me," says Calderon, who started as an F&B trainee at the Hyatt Mexico.

Calderon's start with Posadas came early in his career with a 14-month hotel management trainee program. After receiving a bachelor's degree in hotel management in 1983 from the Centro de Estudios Superiores de San Angel in Mexico City, he worked in the sales division of Grupo Presidente, eventually working at hotels such as the Westin in Ixtapa, the Sheraton Acapulco and Intercontinentals in Ixtapa and Guadalajara.

He joined Posadas in 1999 as sales director for the all-inclusive Fiesta Americana brand and oversaw its growth for 20 years before taking on other top sales positions in the organization, eventually becoming responsible for sales teams at some 80 hotels around Mexico. By 2010, he was named chief commercial officer and later became COO.



Renderings of the Grand Fiesta Americana Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, and the Fiesta Americana Punta Varadero

Calderon says working in Ixtapa and Acapulco taught him how to meet the needs of international guests and gave him insights into the needs of the business traveler. One of his early mentors was Balya Brykman, at the time GM of the Sheraton Acapulco. She also served as vice president of operations for Starwood Mexico and Central America before retiring.

POSADAS PLAN

Today Calderon is expanding the company's reach into the Caribbean, where it plans to open two hotels in Cuba this year and one in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, in 2019. The 5-star, 558-room Grand Fiesta Americana Punta Cana Los Corales all-inclusive resort, a US\$130 million development, will be the ninth in the brand. The company sees opportunities to expand further in Punta Cana, but Calderon didn't offer details. It may also look to expand to other Caribbean destinations, he says, such as Jamaica and Aruba.

As part of its expansion plan, Posadas seeks to have a mix of management-only hotels, with a mix of company-owned properties in areas it considers strategic,

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including a new, unnamed 850-room project in a landmark district in Mexico City.

Of the 54 hotels Posadas plans to develop, 18 will be its 5- and 4.5-star brands, Live Aqua, Grand Fiesta Americana, Fiesta American and The Exploran. The rest will be divided between four mid-market and one vacation club hotel.

Calderon adds that Posadas is developing its resort portfolio and increasing inventory in other brands. "Sometimes it's easier to sign a contract for a business hotel of 120 rooms than for a multimillion investment of a resort of 800 rooms," he says. "Right now, we're happy to say we're growing in all the sectors."

Posadas' Caribbean venture isn't its first

outside Mexico. In 1998 it acquired the South American Caesar Park hotels; it sold the 15 hotels six years ago.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

One challenge facing Posadas' plan to open so many hotels will be its ability to secure the right talent and implement corporate culture across the brands, Calderon says.

He didn't get specific on security in response to continued reports of violence in Mexico, particularly Acapulco and even Los Cabos. "We're working with the local authorities and the national police trying to spread out the message in terms of security, to try to give people a reference and a perspective of any incidents," Calderon says.

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