

## LRA Worldwide to Conduct Brand Assurance Program for aloft Hotels

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Philadelphia-Based Consulting Company Expands its Global Quality Assurance Program for Starwood Hotels & Resorts

aloft Hotels, the new lifestyle brand offering from Starwood Hotels & Resorts, has selected LRA Worldwide, Inc. to design and deploy its brand assurance evaluation program. This selection represents an extension of the partnership between LRA and Starwood, LRA currently conducts the global brand assurance programs for all of the Starwood brands - Westin Hotels & Resorts, W Hotels, Sheraton Hotels & Resorts, Le Méridien, The Luxury Collection, St. Regis and Four Points by Sheraton. Beginning this summer, LRA will launch a new program customized to measure the unique elements of the aloft brand experience in order to support each individual opening.

The aloft Montreal Airport was the first of the brand to open in early June, the first U.S.-based property followed suit two weeks later in Southern California with the opening of the aloft Ontario-Rancho Cucamonga. Eighteen more openings are scheduled for 2008, including several slotted for this summer in locales ranging from Chicago (aloft Chicago O'Hare) to China (aloft Beijing, Haidian). LRA consultants will visit each location to ensure the proper delivery of aloft's unique promise of sophistication, function, atmosphere and style, as well as the product and service standards that support them.

'Starwood has a long-standing and valued partnership with LRA,' explained Marlon Whyte, Director - Operations, aloft Hotels. 'LRA has proven its ability to effectively measure the elements of the guest experience that define each of our brands, from the Four Points by Sheraton in Detroit to a Le Méridien in Damascus. We have every confidence that they will be able to support aloft Hotels in a manner that will allow us to grow the brand with confidence and deliver on our very specific brand promise.'

Including Starwood, LRA provides performance measurement services to eight of the top ten hotel companies in the world. In all, LRA's Quality Assurance practice conducts nearly 13,000 site visits and evaluations each year, either as a stand-alone offering or as an integrated part of an overall Customer Experience Management project. In addition to its work with other lodging clients such as Hyatt Hotels Corporation, InterContinental Hotels Group and Wyndham Worldwide, LRA provides QA services to industry leaders in sports (PGA TOUR, Delaware North Companies), Conference Centers (ARAMARK), Timeshare (Interval International, Shell Vacations Club), Gaming (Churchill Downs, Stratosphere Las Vegas), Homebuilding (Toll Brothers) and Travel (The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey).

'It is always quite gratifying when an existing client expands its relationship with LRA, as it speaks to the value that we are providing on a daily basis,' said John Roberto, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of LRA's Quality Assurance practice. 'Starwood has always been very proactive about putting the guest experience first, designing and implementing the proper quality assurance programs to ensure their brand experience is delivered consistently and exceptionally. We will nurture and grow the aloft Hotels brand assurance program right alongside the aloft brand.'

### **About Starwood Hotels & Resorts**

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. is one of the leading hotel and leisure companies in the world with approximately 900 properties in more than 100 countries and 155,000 employees at its owned and managed properties. Starwood Hotels is a fully integrated owner, operator and franchisor of hotels and resorts with the following internationally renowned brands: St. Regis(R), The Luxury Collection(R), Sheraton(R), Westin(R), Four Points(R) by Sheraton, W(R), Le Méridien(R) and the recently launched Aloft<sup>SM</sup> and Element <sup>SM</sup> Hotels. Starwood Hotels also owns Starwood Vacation Ownership, Inc., one of the premier developers and operators of high quality vacation interval ownership resorts. For more information, please visit [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)

### **About LRA Worldwide, Inc**

LRA Worldwide, Inc. is a leading research and consulting company that specializes in Customer Experience Management (CEM). LRA helps companies and brands design and deliver the optimal customer experience across all key touch points using an integrated suite of services that measure and improve service quality, customer satisfaction, employee performance, loyalty, customer advocacy and profitability. LRA specializes in 'operationalizing the brand' - turning brand promise and customer strategy into operational reality. LRA's CEM practice areas include CEM Strategy Consulting, Standards Development & Content Management, Organizational Development & Training, Research and Quality Assurance & Mystery Shopping, these are either deployed together in a strategic manner to continually monitor and improve the customer experience or deployed individually to address a specific tactical client need.

LRA's clients include some of the world's leading companies and brands, including Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Hyatt Hotels & Resorts, the PGA TOUR, Albertsons Supermarkets, the National Basketball Association and First Niagara Financial Group. For more information, visit the company's Web site at [www.LRAworldwide.com](http://www.LRAworldwide.com).

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