

Without Reservations: How A Family Root Beer Stand Grew Into A Global Hotel Company
Interview Guide

NOTE: This guide is designed to assist members of the media to prepare for an interview with the author, J.W. "Bill" Marriott, Jr.

Q1: How is this book different from your first book?

Q2: Tell us about your choice of a co-author, Kathi Brown?

Q3: Contrast the first Golden Age of Travel which was bookmarked by the invention of the automobile and the highway system, and then the airplane, and this second Golden Age of Travel you say we are embarking on now, of which globalization plays a major role. How did this shape your business the first time around and how is it shaping your business today?

Q4: You have acted as a statesman of sorts, having had close personal relationship with many presidents and members of their cabinets, and having lobbied Congress for many issues, ranging from getting travel back off the ground after 9-11 to expediting the visa process and re-hauling immigration reform today. Why is this important?

Q5: In your book, you talk about how travel opens up people's minds and their way of thinking about the world. Do you really think that travel breeds tolerance?

Q6: You give your dad a lot of credit for founding the company, but you were really the one who took the risks and built the hotel business. Why? It would have been easier to just stick with the restaurant business, wouldn't it?

Q7: You talk about the choice of Arne Sorenson as Marriott's third CEO, and how you arrived at that decision. Do you think one of your children will be ready for the job some day?

Q8: Marriott is known for its service culture. What is the craziest customer service story you can think of? Your people really go to great lengths.

Q9: Is it true—the customer is always right?

Q10: What's the best way to get ahead in the hotel business? You talk about people who work their way up from waiters and housekeepers to executive positions—is that still something that happens today?

Q11: One of your first jobs in the business was as a dishwasher, then the grill. What did those jobs teach you?

Q12: You talk about the heart-wrenching decision to let more than 1,000 people go in the 1990s, and also later. What guided you in these decisions?

Q13: Your book is organized around “values.” Why are these important in business today? Isn’t it just about profit and losses?

Q14: When you get to be the CEO, and your last name is Marriott, people might tend to be a little cautious around you. Yet in your book you talk about how you value people who speak up. How do you get people to be comfortable doing that?

Q15: You are a paradox—you write 700 handwritten notes of thanks a year (many of which people frame) but yet you have one of the most popular corporate blogs in America. Tell me why both are important.

Q16: Marriott has been the training ground for many corporate executives who have gone on to run other big companies, many in the hospitality industry. What do you think about that?

Q17: Some people say that Marriott has lost its Mojo. You even admit in your book that Starwood caught you by surprise with the Heavenly Bed and with W. So what do you say about that?

Q18: How has technology changed your industry and the way you serve guests?

Q19: You have led Marriott through many crises, including 9-11, the uprising in Cairo, and the bombing in Jakarta. Why do you keep opening hotels in dangerous locations?

Q20: What do you look for in a General Manager? What makes a great GM?

Q21: You are a hands-on leader, visiting 200 hotels a year. Why?

Q22: Marriott wasn’t always a fan of franchising. But today, more than half of your hotels are franchised. What changed?

Q23: What are some of your boldest decisions and innovations in your years as CEO?

Q24: You suffered three heart attacks over three months in 1989. What did that teach you?

Q25: You are known as an impatient man. You say “decide to decide.” Is this an important attribute of a leader? You say “follow your head and your heart.” Why?

Q26: Talk about the importance of your faith in informing your decisions and leading the company.

Q27: Talk about some of the businesses that you tried and failed (Cruise Lines, Great America Theme Parks, etc.), or deals that you didn’t pursue that you wish you did (Hyatt lobbies, Disney acquisition), or wonder what would have happened if you did.

Q28: Corporate Social Responsibility is a popular buzz word these days, but Marriott has always been committed to the community. Why and how has it changed over time?

Q29: Your dad left you “a letter in the drawer” when you became CEO, and they’ve guided you over the years. Which point did you find the most difficult to follow, and which do you think was the most important?

Q30: In your book, you include your own “Recipe for Success.” It’s sort of an open letter from you to all your employees. Is there a point on there that is your favorite?

Q31: Famous quotes are sprinkled throughout your book. Why did you choose these?

Q32: When you look back on your life and career, what one thing do you hope people will say about you?