

## colleen o'shea

### DiLeonardo



**F**or Colleen O'Shea, who joined Providence, RI-based design firm DiLeonardo in January as its director of business development and client services, her passion for the hospitality industry first began with her love of travel.

"I had an idea that I wanted to see the world, but I didn't have a specific job in mind," said O'Shea, who came to DiLeonardo fresh off a stint as the sales and marketing manager for Chicago-based Gettys ONE, a subsidiary of The Gettys Group dedicated to interior design and procurement solutions for select-service hotels. "Having family in Ireland, I had my first passport at the age of two, so I knew that would be a love of mine no matter what work I was doing."

She served as a flight attendant with United Airlines, where she "was able to fulfill my wanderlust. Having been to nearly 35 countries and six continents, I have experienced numerous cultures. Those experiences lead me to the second part of the journey when one travels: hospitality."

She then went on to spend almost eight years on the development team at Hilton Worldwide, where she "worked for many years on the process of franchise applications and getting hotels built. I think those experiences and relationships prepared me for the next phase of building a hotel into the design aspect, and making each project unique and relevant to their market," O'Shea said.

At DiLeonardo, O'Shea oversees interaction with existing clients while driving efforts for the acquisition of new business opportunities, with a focus on the Americas, according to the firm.

"I do a lot of research on where there is a growing or an emerging market," said the Chicago native, who is a proud fan of sports teams from the Windy City, especially the Cubs. "I look at what types of product is going into markets and who the key players are, whether that is on the brand side looking to grow its presence, as well as developers and operators to get those hotels built."

O'Shea's position with DiLeonardo is far from a 9-to-5 desk job, and she gets to frequently partake

in her other passion: travel.

"Most days are not typical, and I think that makes my job new and exciting," she said. "Good communication with our clients is key to making sure our team is positioned to make the project successful and to exceed client expectations. And, I get to travel—a lot. In a given week, I can be found in Washington, DC, San Diego or Chicago—it really depends on the needs of our clients."

"Most everything we do in hospitality comes out of relationships," she continued. "Understanding that different clients have different visions for their project is the key to starting—and continuing—good relationships. I love meeting new people, and learning about what is important to them has made me a good listener. I think that is paramount at the start of any relationship and project."

O'Shea is particularly excited about the formation of DiLeonardo's Di STUDIO, a dedicated team focused on bringing design excellence and experience in a streamlined approach to lifestyle, select and boutique projects, according to the firm.

"With the introduction of Di STUDIO, the opportunities are boundless and opens us up to a new way of how we think about design," she said. "We are now in a new segment of the market and have several projects in our pipeline. Being on the cusp of innovation and new thinking that will predict how we travel is an exciting opportunity."

Among the projects O'Shea is working on for DiLeonardo—which has had a hand in designing a number of notable properties around the globe, including the JW Marriott Hotel in Chicago; the St. Regis Sanya Yalong Bay Resort in Sanya, China; and the Hilton Hotel in Chennai, India—is the renovation of a five-star destination hotel in Arizona, as well as a new project that, she said, will "have a global impact on how we design for our future travelers."

O'Shea has warmed up to her new digs quickly. "So far, it has been an amazing experience," she said. "Working with and collaborating with all of our offices creates an added dimension in how we work

#### Greatest professional strength?

I love people.

**Weakness?** I sometimes care too much.

**Your hero/mentor?** My dad

**Source of inspiration?** Nature

**A mantra or saying you live by?** I am exactly where I am supposed to be.

**Favorite hotel?** Hilton Chicago. My family has a history there.

**Favorite color?** Navy blue

**Favorite place?** Hong Kong

**Favorite app?** Google Maps. I am new to Rhode Island!

**Favorite website?** Pinterest

**Talent you wish you possessed?** To sing better

**If you were not in this field, what would you be?** An entertainer

### side notes

locally as well as globally, and the breadth of knowledge has been inspiring."

Although she specializes in projects in the Americas, O'Shea said that she would look to an island off the coast of Africa for a dream venture in the hospitality industry. "Given the long winter, I think warm luxury destinations are top of mind," she said. "One dream would be a project in Mauritius that would allow a full immersion into that market, and getting to know the local culture would be ideal."

It would be yet another opportunity for O'Shea to "fly the friendly skies."

—Adam Perkowsky