NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA's Chris Heywood Named a 2024 HSMAI 'Top 25' Extraordinary Mind

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (December 17, 2024) — The Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) has selected Chris Heywood as one of its “Top 25 Extraordinary Minds“ for 2024. This is the 22nd year HSMAI has compiled the list, which annually recognizes exemplary achievement and leadership in hospitality sales, marketing, revenue optimization, and distribution.

“Chris Heywood’s recognition as one of HSMAI’s ‘Top 25 Extraordinary Minds’ is a testament to his remarkable talent, creativity, and commitment to excellence in travel and tourism communications,” said Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA. “Throughout his career, Chris has continually set the standard for innovative public relations and strategic leadership, helping to shape the narrative of some of the USA’s most iconic destinations. We’re thrilled to see him honored by HSMAI and proud to have him on our team.”

Heywood will join an exclusive list when he is honored by HSMAI at a reception in New York City on February 18, 2025. "It is with great pride that we honor HSMAI's 2024 class of Top 25 honorees in hotel sales, marketing, revenue optimization, and distribution," remarked Brian Hicks, President and CEO of HSMAI. "These outstanding professionals, through their creativity, dedication, and commercial acumen, have not only excelled in their domains but have also set new standards of excellence for the industry, inspiring us all.”

The 2024 “Top 25” honorees were judged by a panel of senior industry executives for their recent work based on the following criteria: creativity and innovation, cutting edge sales or marketing campaigns, triumph in challenging situations, and/or efforts that resulted in dramatic gains.

Chris Heywood currently serves as Senior Vice President, Public Relations and Chief Communications Officer for Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the USA—a position he began in the Fall of 2024. In this capacity, he oversees global PR and communications, media relations and reputation management for America’s national tourism board. Before his time with Brand USA, Chris was the Senior Vice President, Global Communications for the Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board from 2022 to 2024. He also began his career with LA Tourism in 1998, completing more than a decade of total service to LA’s official tourism organization over two stints. In between his times with LA Tourism, Heywood served as Executive Vice President, Global Communications for NYC Tourism + Conventions, formerly known as NYC & Company. He began at the organization as a director in 2007 and rose to lead the communications department, beginning in 2014. In his capacity, Heywood was responsible for overseeing a global network of 18 international offices serving 30 global markets in addition to managing domestic PR, corporate communications, and crisis communications. He was instrumental in helping NYC achieve a decade of record-breaking tourism success and helping shepherd the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The “Top 25” will be honored in person at a reception at the New York Marriott Marquis February 18, 2025. The reception is being held in conjunction with the HSMAI Adrian Awards Celebration, which recognizes the winners of the largest and most prestigious competition in global travel marketing.

In addition to the “Top 25” reception, Heywood will be featured in an HSMAI special report, receive a personalized award, and henceforward be recognized as a “Top 25 Mind in Hospitality Sales, Marketing, Revenue Optimization, and Distribution.”

About HSMAI

The Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) is committed to growing business for hotels and their partners and is the industry's leading advocate for intelligent, sustainable hotel revenue growth. The association provides hotel professionals and their partners with tools, insights, and expertise to fuel sales, inspire marketing, and optimize revenue through programs such as the Commercial Strategy Conference, Sales Leader Forum, and Adrian Awards. Founded in 1927, HSMAI is a membership organization comprising more than 5,000 members worldwide, with 40 chapters in the Americas Region. Connect with HSMAI at hsmai.org.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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