

Gwinyai Makuyana

Director of Engineering, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort

Gwinyai Makuyana's colourful career journey has taken him from his humble beginnings as an ambitious young apprentice in Zimbabwe to leading his own team of engineers in some of the best hotels and resorts in the world. Gwinyai has recently started his new role as Director of Engineering, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort – his third assignment with Minor Hotels.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I had always wanted to be an engineer. My father worked in a remote farm, and I grew up listening to him talk about the number of times his equipment would break down and how long it would take to fix it each time due to the shortage of engineers in Zimbabwe at the time. So I tried to find out what I needed to do to become an engineer, started reading as many books on the subject as I could get my hands on and worked hard in my science and mathematics classes. I eventually passed the entrance requirements to begin my journey to becoming an engineer. I started as a trainee glass-processing technician before securing a four-year apprenticeship through the Zimbabwe Manpower Development Programme. I graduated from the programme in 1990 and have since worked as an engineer in various countries and industries.



Gwinyai, second from left, at the King's Cup Elephant Polo 2016 event in Bangkok

I also developed a life-long love for learning: for the past three decades, I've taken a number of additional post-graduate qualifications in various engineering trades, as well as management.

Why did you choose to join Minor Hotels?

Four years ago, I was living in Qatar when a friend who was working in the pre-opening office of Banana Island Resort Doha by Anantara convinced me to interview for a role as the property's first Director of Engineering. I was impressed by what I found out about Minor Hotels online, and had a positive

experience with the people I met during the interview process – so good, in fact, that I accepted the role over another job offer in Qatar's booming construction sector.

To this day, I still think I made the right choice.



Gwinyai with his former team at Banana Island Doha Resort by Anantara

Where has your career with Minor Hotels taken you so far?

After the successful opening of Banana Island Resort Doha by Anantara in 2015, I moved to Bangkok to lead the engineering team at Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort and support the pre-opening of AVANI Riverside Bangkok Hotel. It was truly a proud moment when we launched AVANI Riverside Bangkok Hotel as the brand's first purpose-built property last year. I stayed on in my role until August of this year, when I accepted a transfer to Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort in Oman's picturesque Green Mountain as Director of Engineering.

What and who do you think have contributed to your career in Minor Hotels?

I've been fortunate to have crossed paths with so many people who have shaped my time here. All of my interview experiences have always been great – each time, I left feeling like I learnt something new about my profession and the company.



Gwinyai with his former team at Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort

Robert Kunkler, Rajiv Puri, Desmond Khoo and Eric Leong and the rest of the corporate team have always been accessible and helpful, especially in helping me meet critical pre-opening milestones.

I've also had the privilege of meeting our Founder, Mr. Heinecke, a few times. Each time he would make a point to find out how my family and I are doing.

I strongly believe I wouldn't have been where I am today – in my third role in a third country – if these people haven't been so supportive of my development.

How has your time in Minor Hotels helped you pursue your life-long love for learning?

I've changed little from the voracious learner that I was in my younger years. I felt that my role could benefit from my continuing my management studies, so in 2015, I embarked on an online programme with the Indian Institute of Business Management (IIBMS). For the next year, my evenings were spent

poring over business case studies and listening to online lectures on subjects as wide ranging as marketing, law and finance, and writing a thesis on motivational strategies for enhancing employee performance in hotels in Thailand.

With the unwavering support and encouragement of my colleagues and leaders – especially Desmond Khoo – I graduated with a Doctorate in Management Studies in 2016.

But I didn't stop there – just last month, in August 2017, I became a Certified Hospitality Facilities Executive (CHFE). I believe I'm the first Director of Engineering in the company to obtain this qualification.

Where do you see yourself in the near future?

My goal is to be an Area, Regional or Corporate Director of Engineering in few years' time. Thinking ahead to when my 'in-house' journey ends, I'd love to be able to run my own hospitality design and engineering support consultancy, and assist hotels in their pre- and post-opening operations and in developing their engineering talent from the ground up.

What would be your message to hoteliers who are looking to join Minor Hotels?

The time to join Minor Hotels is now. Get to know our dynamic brands and find out how we're developing our ever-growing footprint over the next few years. If you're passionate about hospitality and want a role that opens up new horizons, the opportunities are endless – we've even got food and lifestyle brands under the Minor International umbrella! Why not get in touch and grow with us today.

Don't miss a chance to grow with us:

www.minorhotels.com/careers