

# KEYS TO THE HURDLES

SERGIO FERRERA



▲ The 1,200-guest Oceania Marina is among the ships Apollo helped restart.

Overseeing hotel operations, food and beverage, crewing and purchasing for clients across the cruise industry, Apollo was on the front lines of the industry's start up in 2021.

"We got to November thinking we're getting there and then in December, we had omicron. We had to stop a bit and start again," said Philippe Faucher, vice president business development, who said the company would have 18 ships in operation by April.

"Obviously, the ships are not running at full capacity and we are dealing with a lot of the aftermath of getting the crew on the ships," he added, speaking at the Marine Hotel Association event in March. "Every few weeks there are missing products because of the shortages, but we're extremely eager and excited to get going."

## Product Availability

Product shortages, shipping prices and lead times are among the challenges for Alia Abou-Assali, vice president of purchasing and logistics.

"What used to take two to three weeks to be ready now can take up to two months, and then we have logistics issues with the shipping lines," she said. "The industry was sleeping for 18 months and everyone started at the same time."

"There is no more just-in-time inventory. Some manufacturers want us to stock four to six months of inventory because of delays and availability issues."

Keys to overcoming the current hurdles are flexibility and communication, she said.

"If something is not available, tell us what you can offer as a substitute, and then we will see if the cruise lines will

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accept it or not? That has been the name of the game since this all started."

## Communication Key

Faucher said communication was key.

"We need to know what's going to be available and what's not going to come. There's nothing like getting bad news, but the earlier we receive the bad news the better it is. We like to be prepared to tell the crew what to tell the guests," he said.

With some products unavailable, shipboard teams have been given more freedom to find substitutes and suggest changes.

"Our shipboard management today has a lot more umph than they've ever had," Faucher explained.

"If they get into ports and know they are short of a product, we give them more bandwidth to walk around and see if they can solve the problem."

"Our costs are still fundamental to making sure we stay in business. If our costs shoot through the roof it's not going to work for anyone."

"At the end of day you have a community of crew on that ship that have to make the experience good for the customers and do the best they can do so giving them the information they need and preparing them accordingly is a win-win." ■