

Authority Magazine

Women Of The C-Suite: Jessica Hoppe Of The World, Residences at Sea On The Five Things You Need To Succeed As A Senior Executive

An Interview With Vanessa Morcom



AS a part of our interview series called “Women Of The C-Suite”, we had the pleasure of interviewing Jessica Hoppe.

Jessica Hoppe serves as President and CEO of The World, Residences at Sea, where she oversees operations and leads the strategic vision for the unique residential yachting community. Her leadership has strengthened both the organization’s performance and its position within the broader luxury maritime industry. Prior to joining The World, she served as general counsel for Crystal Cruises and as general counsel and SVP of governmental affairs at Genting Americas Inc., in addition to holding roles with Cleary, Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP in New York City and Balch & Bingham in Gulfport, Mississippi, and Birmingham, Alabama.

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Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Before we dig in, our readers would like to get to know you a bit more. Can you tell us a bit about your “backstory”? What led you to this particular career path?

When I look back, my career has not been linear, and that has been one of the greatest lessons for me. I started as a lawyer, first in private practice and then in New York after moving there in 2007. Then I eventually became a general counsel and spent nearly two decades working across law, government affairs, and public relations, including serving as SVP of government affairs and public relations for a hospitality company. That experience allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of how organizations operate and how decisions are made. Over time, I realized I was drawn to shaping strategy, not just advising on it. In 2017, I joined

Crystal Cruises as general counsel and vice president, which introduced me to luxury travel and ship-based operations. In 2022, I joined The World as general counsel and VP of strategic alignment, later becoming Chief Administrative Officer and, in April 2024, interim President and CEO and in June 2024, President and CEO.

Can you share the most interesting story that happened to you since you began leading your company?

Since stepping into the role in April 2024, I've had the opportunity to experience The World in a very different way — not just as an executive, but as someone fully immersed in the life of the ship. One moment that stands out is sailing into Hong Kong and Sydney. There's something incredibly powerful about arriving by sea into those iconic cities, standing on the bridge with the crew or on deck with Residents, and seeing their reactions. For many of them, this isn't just travel — it's home, and those arrivals become shared memories.

What struck me most in those moments is how personal this experience is. At the same time that we are managing complex operations — promoting long-standing team members, bringing in new leadership, implementing new technology, and continuing to improve performance — you are also seeing, in real time, the impact those decisions have on people's lives.

We've achieved record levels of resident satisfaction, which I'm incredibly proud of, but what stays with me more are those everyday moments onboard — seeing a Resident light up because something was done exactly right for them.

It's a reminder that while there is a lot of complexity behind the scenes, what we are really delivering is something much simpler and much more meaningful: a place where people feel at home while exploring the world.

It has been said that our mistakes can be our greatest teachers. Can you share a story about the funniest mistake you made when you were first starting? Can you tell us what lesson you learned from that?

Early in my career, I attended an event where I should have taken the time to review the guest list in advance — but I didn't. During a conversation, I casually asked someone what they did, and it turned out they were the Speaker of the House for that state. He was incredibly gracious in his response, but it was a moment I never forgot. It was a simple mistake, but it taught me something important: preparation is a form of respect — for the people you are meeting and for the role you represent.

From that point on, I made it a habit to walk into every meeting or event with a clear understanding of who is in the room. It's a small discipline, but it makes a meaningful difference in how you engage and build relationships.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

I think along the way, we're all shaped by different kinds of influences. Some people have a very positive impact, and others challenge you in ways that push you to grow — either because you see what you don't want to become, or because they motivate you to move your life in a different direction. I've experienced both, and I feel fortunate that I've been able to recognize and learn from each.

If I had to point to one person, it would be my sister, Jayne. She has been a constant and deeply positive influence in my life. At pivotal moments, she has been there — helping me transition to a law school, supporting me when I moved to New York and found my first apartment, and consistently encouraging me to take bold steps, even when I wasn't entirely sure I was ready.

What has always stood out is that she often saw a bigger picture for me than I could see for myself at the time. That kind of belief and support makes a lasting difference, and it's something I carry with me in how I approach both my career and how I support others.

Leadership often entails making difficult decisions or hard choices between two apparently good paths. Can you share a story with us about a hard decision or choice you had to make as a leader?

One of the most challenging aspects of leadership is when you are faced with two paths that both have merit, but serve different priorities. In my role, I've had to navigate decisions that involve balancing long-term strategic positioning with what is right for the community in the present. Those are not always perfectly aligned. What makes those decisions difficult is that you are not just weighing data — you are weighing impact on people, on culture, and on the long-term health of the organization.

In those moments, I've learned that clarity comes from listening deeply, understanding what matters most to your stakeholders, and being willing to adjust course when needed.

Leadership is not about pushing a single outcome — it's about guiding the organization in a way that maintains trust while still moving forward with purpose. Hopefully in these situations you can execute on one path, while leaving optionality for the other.

Ok, thank you for that. Let's now jump to the primary focus of our interview. Most of our readers — in fact, most people — think they have a pretty good idea of what a CEO or executive does. But in just a few words can you explain what an executive does that is different from the responsibilities of the other leaders?

Most leaders are responsible for delivering excellence within their specific areas — operations, hospitality, finance, customer service, etc. An executive's role is different because it sits above those individual functions. The responsibility is not just to lead one area well, but to ensure that every part of the organization is aligned, working together, and moving toward the same long-term vision.

As CEO, my role is to ensure all those areas are aligned and moving in the same direction and working toward a shared vision. At The World, that means balancing long-term strategy with the realities of daily operations, while also keeping our Residents' experience at the center of every decision. Because this is not just a ship but a home, the responsibility feels deeply personal.

What makes the role different to me is perspective. While our leadership team is rightly focused on delivering excellence in their areas day to day, I constantly zoom out and look ahead — anticipating challenges, identifying opportunities, anticipating risks and making sure our strategy supports the future of the ship and the community. Ultimately, my job is to protect our Residents' asset — their ship, what makes us unique, and ensure we are always improving and raising the bar.

What are the “myths” that you would like to dispel about being a CEO or executive? Can you explain what you mean?

I find one of the biggest myths about being a CEO is that you have all the answers. In reality, the role is more so about asking the right questions, and surrounding yourself with intelligent, capable people who bring deep expertise and perspective in their respective areas.

There is also this perception that the job is simply all vision and big decisions. While that is certainly part of it, a great deal of the role is listening, aligning teams, and making sure everyone understands not just what you are doing, but why. It is less about authority and more about accountability.

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges faced by women executives that aren't typically faced by their male counterparts?

In my experience, one of the biggest challenges women executives can face is perception. There are often unspoken expectations about how women should lead — being assertive but not perceived as too strong, confident but not too direct, decisive but still approachable. It can feel like there is a very narrow lane for how leadership is expected to look, and that is something many male leaders do not have to navigate in quite the same way.

Another reality I see, and one that is not talked about enough, is how much many women are balancing at the same time. Whether it is children, supporting parents, relationships, marriages or partnerships, or broader personal responsibilities — many women are carrying a significant load alongside their professional roles. What is remarkable to me is how often they do it exceptionally well, with a level of discipline, resilience, and care that is not always fully recognized.

Representation at the top is also still evolving. Fewer women in senior roles can mean fewer visible examples of different leadership styles succeeding, which makes it even more important to create space for diverse approaches to leadership.

That is why I believe strongly in women supporting women. Mentorship, sponsorship, and simply showing up for one another can make a meaningful difference — not just in individual careers, but in shaping the culture of organizations more broadly.

For me, the focus has always been on doing the work well and supporting the people around me. Over time, results and consistency speak louder than assumptions. Leadership should ultimately be defined by impact — by the culture you build, the trust you earn, and the success of the team — not by preconceived ideas of what a leader is supposed to look like.

What is the most striking difference between your actual job and how you thought the job would be?

One advantage I had coming into the role of CEO was that I already knew the organization very well. Before being appointed CEO, I served as Interim CEO, and prior to that I was The World's general counsel. In those roles, I had the opportunity to work closely with many parts of the company and gain a strong understanding of how the ship operates, from governance and strategy to the unique relationship we have with our Residents.

Even with that familiarity, the most striking difference has been how much broader and more immersive the role becomes once you are ultimately responsible for the entire organization. As general counsel, I was deeply involved in the company's legal, governance, and strategic matters, and as Interim CEO I began to experience the operational side of the business more directly. But stepping fully into the CEO role brings a much wider perspective — where every aspect of the organization, from marine operations to hospitality to long-term planning, connects and ultimately falls under your responsibility.

What became especially clear is how interconnected everything is. Running a ship is already a complex operation, but at The World it is experienced on an even deeper level because this is not simply a travel experience. It is a community and a home for our Residents. That means every decision, whether operational, strategic, or cultural, has a direct impact on people's daily lives.

So, while I expected the role to be complex, what surprised me most was the depth of that interconnectedness that comes with stewarding something so unique.

Is everyone cut out to be an executive? In your opinion, which specific traits increase the likelihood that a person will be a successful executive and what type of person should avoid aspiring to be an executive? Can you explain what you mean?

I don't believe everyone is cut out to be an executive, and I also don't believe everyone wants to be — and that is perfectly okay. The executive role requires a very specific combination of skills and mindset. You need to be able to operate in the details, but also consistently pull yourself up to a much higher level — looking at the organization from a broader, strategic perspective. That ability to move between the two is critical.

Strong communication is also essential. As an executive, you are often the face of the organization — whether that is in front of a board, your leadership team, or other stakeholders. You need to be comfortable representing the organization, making decisions, and clearly articulating direction, even when the path forward is not entirely certain.

I also think the role can be challenging for individuals who are deeply task-oriented and prefer to stay in the details. Those skills are incredibly valuable — and organizations depend on them — but the executive role requires you to step back, synthesize information at a high level, and make decisions that affect the broader organization.

At the end of the day, it's less about hierarchy and more about fit. Some people thrive in roles that allow them to go deep and execute with precision, while others are energized by navigating complexity, setting direction, and leading across an entire organization. Both are equally important, but they are fundamentally different paths.



What are your “5 Things You Need to Succeed as a Senior Executive” and why? (Please share a story or example for each.)

1. Listening

Leading The World requires truly listening — to Residents, Crew, and our corporate team. What makes this environment unique is that feedback is immediate and often very personal. Being able to listen closely, pick up on what is said and sometimes what is not said, allows us to anticipate needs and create experiences that feel thoughtful and tailored.

2. Empathy

This is not just a business — it is people’s home. Decisions we make impact their daily lives in a very direct way. Leading with empathy helps ensure that we are not just making the right operational decisions, but that we are doing so in a way that respects the community and the individuals within it. It also strengthens trust across ship and shore.

3. Adaptability

One of the biggest shifts for me moving into this role has been the need to move seamlessly between very different types of conversations. At one moment, I may be focused on long-term strategy or organizational priorities, and the next, I’m speaking directly with a Resident about something deeply personal to their experience onboard. Being able to adjust your approach while staying grounded and consistent is critical in a role like this.

4. Strategic Thinking

It is important to always be looking ahead — understanding where the industry is going, where our risks and opportunities lie, and how we continue to evolve while protecting what makes The World special. Strategy, to me, is about making sure that what we are doing today supports the long-term health of both the ship and the community.

5. Integrity

Credibility is everything in a role like this. Being transparent, following through on commitments, and making decisions with consistency builds trust over time. When people trust leadership, it creates alignment across the organization and allows teams to perform at a higher level.

You are a person of great influence. If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good for the greatest number of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger.

If I could inspire a movement, it would be focused on improving access to healthy food — especially for children. Through my role, I've had the opportunity to travel around the world, and we often visit places where people live very humble lives. That is not lost on me, or on our Residents. It creates a very real awareness of how uneven access to basic needs can be.

To me, one of the most impactful things we could do is focus on the logistics of delivering healthy, reliable food to those who need it most — whether that is ensuring children in the United States have access to nutritious meals at school, or better leveraging the abundance of food resources globally to reach underserved communities.

When people don't have to worry about food security — when children are properly nourished — it changes everything. It allows them to focus, to learn, to grow, and ultimately to contribute in meaningful ways. If we could solve that at scale, I believe it would unlock potential across entire communities and have a lasting impact on the world.

We are very blessed that some very prominent names in Business, VC funding, Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US with whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might just see this if we tag them

There are many interesting leaders I could point to, but I am especially drawn to people who have demonstrated extraordinary resilience under pressure. I would love to have a conversation with Sunita “Sunī” Williams, particularly given her experience on the Starliner mission that was expected to last only a short period but extended into months in space due to unforeseen challenges. That kind of experience requires a level of mental toughness, adaptability, and composure that very few people will ever be asked to demonstrate. What I would be most interested in understanding is

how she maintained focus, perspective, and emotional balance in an environment where there is no real ability to step away. There is something very powerful about learning from people who have operated at the edge of uncertainty – and done so successfully.

Thank you for these fantastic insights. We greatly appreciate the time you spent on this.