

Erica Qualls

GENERAL MANAGER, MARRIOTT MARQUIS HOTEL
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

After the birth of her fourth child, Erica Qualls re-entered the workforce by taking the graveyard shift answering the telephone for \$7 per hour at the Santa Clara, California Marriott. She never realized that this post would be a stepping-stone to her current position as the general manager of the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, where she is responsible for running a \$100 million-a-year operation with 1,675 hotel rooms.

Having relied on mentors throughout her career, Erica is passionate about mentoring associates at Marriott and many other young women in the Atlanta community. She encourages them to look at each job as a building block in a successful career. As she has often said to countless young associates at Marriott: “If you are willing to grow, there is no other industry that grows people from hourly associate into management, into senior leadership faster than the hospitality industry.”

Like most people, Erica’s career has not followed a straight line. After a few months on the graveyard shift, Erica was promoted to night audit, where she was responsible for running the books and getting the hotel ready to operate the next day. Since that time, she has had stints working in the front office, housekeeping, accounting and human resources.

“I was able to get some technical expertise early on as it related to the front office and finance,” Erica says. “I also went into operations as a housekeeping manager and learned there how to set strategies centered on leading large teams and developing the skills to build strong relationships and foster great teamwork. I was getting all these skills, and I was getting them very quickly.”

Despite the demands of her job, Erica’s position in the travel industry provides the flexibility she needs to be an active member in her community and to support her family.

