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The Anchor Asset: Why Hotels Matter in Mixed-Use

SPEAKERS

Eddy Tannous
Chief Operating Officer
Rotana Hotel Management...

Selim El Zein
Vice President - Head of Asset
Management & Investments
Deyaar Development PJSC

Oussama El Kadiri
Partner Head of Hospitality,
Tourism & Leisure Advisory MENA
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Dean Rossilli
Senior Vice President of Hospitality
DAMAC Properties

OVERVIEW

This session at FHS World 2026 examined the strategic role of hotels as anchor assets within mixed-use developments, drawing on the lived experience of developers and operators active across Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and the broader region. Moderated by Oussama El Kadiri of Knight Frank, the panel featured Eddy Tannous of Rotana, Selim El Zein of Deyaar, and Dean Rossilli of DAMAC, each bringing a distinct vantage point spanning hotel operations, asset management, and large-scale development. The central argument that emerged was that hotels are not merely one component among many, but the binding engine of a mixed-use ecosystem — driving value for branded residences, retail, wellness, and community identity alike. The discussion moved from high-level philosophy into practical guidance on governance, early operator integration, KPI frameworks, and the dangers of treating individual assets within a development as separate profit-and-loss centres.

KEY THEMES

- Hotels as the anchor and engine of mixed-use ecosystems
- Early operator integration in design and governance
- Branded residences and the hospitality–residential interface
- Avoiding the individual P&L mindset across mixed-use components
- Operational KPIs, quality audits, and AI-driven performance management
- Matching brand positioning and demographics to location

TAKEAWAYS

- Bring the hotel operator in at the design phase, not after construction is underway — late integration is costly, creates misalignment, and produces developments where components feel 'glued on' rather than integrated.
- Treat the entire mixed-use development as one ecosystem with a single road map, not as individual P&L centres; developers who adopt the long-term ecosystem view consistently outperform those who do not.
- The hotel's primary services — food and beverage, wellness, laundry, and soft amenities — should be calibrated to complement, not compete with, surrounding retail and residential components, based on a clear understanding of the guest and resident persona.
- Establish governance structures and KPI frameworks from the outset, covering design approvals, procurement, quality audits, and resident engagement metrics, so every stakeholder operates with a clearly defined set of expectations.

- Do not create a visible separation between hotel guests and residents in a mixed-use community; if facilities and space are planned correctly from the beginning, inclusive access reinforces community value rather than diluting the hotel experience.
- Brand selection must be driven by location tier and target demographic, not by trophy-name appeal — a luxury flag in the wrong location or for the wrong buyer profile will not deliver the expected return.

QUOTES

"I imagine a car without an engine. I think the hotel is that engine. It's that center where everyone will converge into in that community."

— Eddy Tannous, Chief Operating Officer, Rotana Hotel Management Corporation PJSC

"Everyone wants to have a luxury brand on the front door. It's a fantastic thing, but are you going to get that return if you are not in that tier one city or that location one area within a particular city?"

— Dean Rossilli, Senior Vice President of Hospitality, DAMAC Properties

"Don't create the separation between your hotel guest and the residents. If it's well thought of from the beginning, you have space and availability of facilities for all your guests, including the community and the guests that are staying in your hotel and paying for their room."

— Eddy Tannous, Chief Operating Officer, Rotana Hotel Management Corporation PJSC

"Too often than not, you're bringing in a brand after the fact, and they need to be there at the beginning. They need to be there to provide their input on how that flow, that integrated service, and the value proposition will enhance the overall product."

— Dean Rossilli, Senior Vice President of Hospitality, DAMAC Properties