

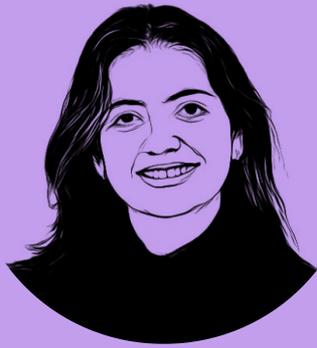
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The Fast-Forward Tech Stack for 2024

The Hotel Yearbook Technology 2024

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Charting a Digital Odyssey: An EHL Student's Journey into the Future of Hospitality Tech

Human Stack

Daniela Tornoe

EHL Graduate

Interviewed by **Ian Millar**

*Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality
Business School*

To bring a new angle to the hotel yearbook technology edition, senior lecturer EHL [Ian Millar](#) sat down with one of his final year EHL students [Daniela Tornoe](#) to discuss her thoughts on a future career in hospitality technology after graduating from EHL in the summer of 2023. For context, with the talent crisis hitting all hospitality sectors more than ever, we need to inspire young hospitality talent to remain in this great industry.

HI DANIELA, MAYBE TO GET THIS INTERVIEW GOING, COULD YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF?

Hello Mr. M, first thank you so much for this fantastic opportunity to be with you today for this interview. To tell you a little about me, I was born and raised in Guatemala in the capital city. From a very early age, my parents supported me in many different activities; I started developing my artistic side first. I danced ballet and flamenco and played the national instrument, Marimba, with my school's crew. During my last years of Elementary School, I discovered my passion for volleyball. I started practising in my school, and soon after, I decided to improve and play on a more competitive level. After much practice in the national sports centre, I was selected for the U18 and U20 national teams and competed across Central America and the Caribbean. I committed to all these facets without neglecting my school responsibilities.

I would say the diversity in the things I enjoyed outside the classroom was also present in the courses I preferred; I liked everything. Therefore, during my last year of high school, I was puzzled when choosing one field to specialise in. I always dreamed of having a study abroad experience, and I thought I would fulfil this by playing in Division One for a school in the US. Unfortunately, I suffered a big knee injury and had to stop competing. This made my career decision purely academic rather than based on the volleyball team. I like numbers and enjoy the human connection; therefore, when I came across a career in hospitality, it made sense to me.

Furthermore, I was exposed to the idea of hospitality my entire childhood. My grandmother would always open the doors for people to stay at her home, be splendid on the meals, and attention to her guests. I started studying one semester in Guatemala, and I loved it, and something that wouldn't leave my mind was the idea of "If this is great here, just imagine how great it can be somewhere else?" That was when I came across EHL; I was mesmerised in the first few minutes of the video and knew it would be a dream to complete an education there. I applied for the school and confirmed my decision when I received a Tuition Waiver Scholarship for the first year. In a matter of a few months, my life did a 360° turn. I moved to the other side of the world to join thousands of international students that share my passion.

WHAT MADE YOU FINALLY DECIDE THAT A FUTURE CAREER IN HOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGY IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

As you know, EHL allows us to do two internships within our study program. I did my first internship in Disneyland, Paris. During the first months, I was trained in their internal property management system and realised how obsolete these programs were. The lost time and the ancient interface made me wonder why we still use this. Back then, I thought maybe there was not something better, but why. Back in EHL, I joined

the IT Service Desk as a student assistant throughout my bachelor's. The team is excellent, and they took their time to teach me and explain different elements of providing tech support for a big organisation. I supported the installation of some programs for the staff and students, became very good at solving some technical glitches, and contributed to the tech move of some new offices outside of campus. During my third year, for my second internship, I went outside hospitality to gain insight into the luxury world. I worked for the Travel Retail division of Puig, a cosmetics and fashion house.

During my internship, we used a very old system to track sales, and once again, I wondered why we were still using these systems that took ages to load and would make us lose a lot of time. Fortunately, someone that had just joined the company on the Data Analytics team had the same thought and started putting together a new dashboard for the region. My boss invited me to participate in this dashboard's brainstorming sessions. Those were my favourite meetings, talking about the different elements that would make the analysis easier, the different graphs that could help visualise the data, and the filters that should be ingrained in the system.

At this point, I realised I wanted to pursue a career with this orientation. Therefore, for my last semester at EHL, I chose Programming Skills for Business and Hospitality Technology Strategy courses. Well, that was where I had the chance to meet you and decide this is where I want to build a career. All the speakers brought into the class, Nick Price, Floor Bleeker, and Andrew Evers, were so unique to hear from them and their insights. I remember thinking to myself, I want to be like them; how do I get there?

DO YOU THINK THAT TECHNOLOGY CAREER PATHS ARE PROMOTED ENOUGH IN HOTEL SCHOOLS?

Not at all. I made my decision until the very last semester, and I am incredibly thankful for choosing your elective. But before, we had never been exposed to the importance of hospitality tech, which does not make sense to me. In a world that depends on technology and where things are advancing daily, hospitality should lead rather than follow with a significant delay. Hospitality schools should be the principal advocates of this idea.

WHO HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO TAKE THIS CAREER DIRECTION?

Well, first of all, I would like to thank you. Your course was a defining point for my career choice. In every lecture, I learned so many new things. I felt like so much was left to learn, and I loved that feeling. Furthermore, I discovered how fascinating a hospitality tech career could be through the guest speakers you brought into our class. When I first heard Nick Price about how decentralised technology could change the future of hospitality and guarantee a seamless experience for guests, I was mesmerised; I got out of the class and looked at my friends and said, "Can we please talk about what just happened?" And afterward, we had the chance to have Floor and how he explained a 1-day implementation, app functionality and GDPR Regulations. It was just fascinating! Truly everyone we had for class enjoyed what they were doing; for me, that has been key; I want to enjoy what I am working on and feel like I am always learning.

Currently, I am being mentored by Floor; we meet once every two weeks, and he has helped me discover where I would like to start my career. We also take time to discuss some news updates, and I enjoy every time he talks about the projects he is working on, he is so insightful.

WHAT COULD HOTEL SCHOOLS AND INDUSTRY DO MORE AND BETTER TO PROMOTE THE TECHNOLOGY PATH?

I think schools should partner with associations like HFTP to bring more guest lecturers and start mentoring programs. Also, we have this career fair twice a year; the school should try to get more tech-oriented hospitality groups or technology vendors. At the same time, invite alumni succeeding in the hospitality tech industry. I had the chance to speak to Florian Montag, EHL Alumni working in Apaleo, and it's so inspiring to see what he is doing and how motivated he is about the product they are creating to change the industry. We already have the technology mindset, so make us feel heard, allow us to talk with the tenured professionals and share our ideas. Create spaces where we can network and share our points of view on things. I believe big hospitality groups should engage in more student challenges; if you want to improve the guest journey, bring a case study to EHL, take all the input, and build on it.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5, 10 AND 20 YEARS?

Wow, that's a great question. I am unsure about the next few months, let alone the next 5, 10, and 20 years. I am in the process of applying to different companies, and all opportunities are super exciting. I know I want to make an impact. I have many ideas and am so excited to get out there and start sharing and building on them. So I don't know where I will be, but I look forward to being surrounded by knowledgeable people, high-achievers who will encourage me to grow and keep learning. I see myself achieving great things, I am not sure where but I am confident I can make significant contributions. I want to change the industry to improve the holistic hospitality experience. So in 20 years, when I look back, I will feel accomplished, passionate about what I am doing, and always optimistic and excited about the future.



Daniela Tornoe — EHL Graduate

Daniela recently completed her bachelor's degree at EHL Hospitality Business School. Born and raised in Guatemala, Daniela moved to Switzerland to pursue the career of her dreams. Throughout her studies, she contributed to supporting herself by working at the School's IT Service Desk as a student assistant. She has also gained experience in the hospitality industry through an internship in Disneyland Paris and other restaurants in Switzerland. Additionally, Daniela has a background in brand management and data analysis after working on the EMEA Travel Retail brand management team at Puig. Throughout all these experiences Daniela has developed a thorough understanding of the importance of cognitive systems, effective data collection, storytelling, and guest journey. Today, she is ready to continue learning and expanding her horizons as she prepares for a career in hospitality tech.

Ian Millar — Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School

Ian Millar is Manager of Institute of Business Creativity & Senior Lecturer at EHL Hospitality Business School working on the Student Business Projects and delivering hospitality technology courses. His double expertise in the areas of hospitality and information technology sets him at the forefront of new developments in the international hospitality industry. He is Certified Hospitality Technology Professional and a frequent presenter at international IT conferences as well as the author of numerous hospitality technology articles. Ian serves as an advisor to various hospitality technology companies and was a Member of the Hotel Industry Expert Panel for the Singapore Tourism Board advising hotels in the region on best practice technology usage. He is also a mentor for the Metro Accelerator program, advising various hospitality technology start-up companies. He is currently on the HITEC Amsterdam advisory council, organizing Europe's largest hospitality technology conference.

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EHL Hospitality Business School (Lausanne) is an ambassador for traditional Swiss hospitality and has been a pioneer in hospitality education since 1893 with over 25,000 alumni worldwide and over 120 nationalities. EHL is the world's first hospitality management school that provides university-level programs at its campuses in Lausanne and Chur-Passugg, as well as online learning solutions. The School is ranked n°1 by QS World University Rankings by subject and CEOWorld Magazine, and its gastronomic restaurant is the world's only educational establishment to hold a Michelin Star.