

■■■ 60-SECOND PROFILE

ONE BIG TEAM

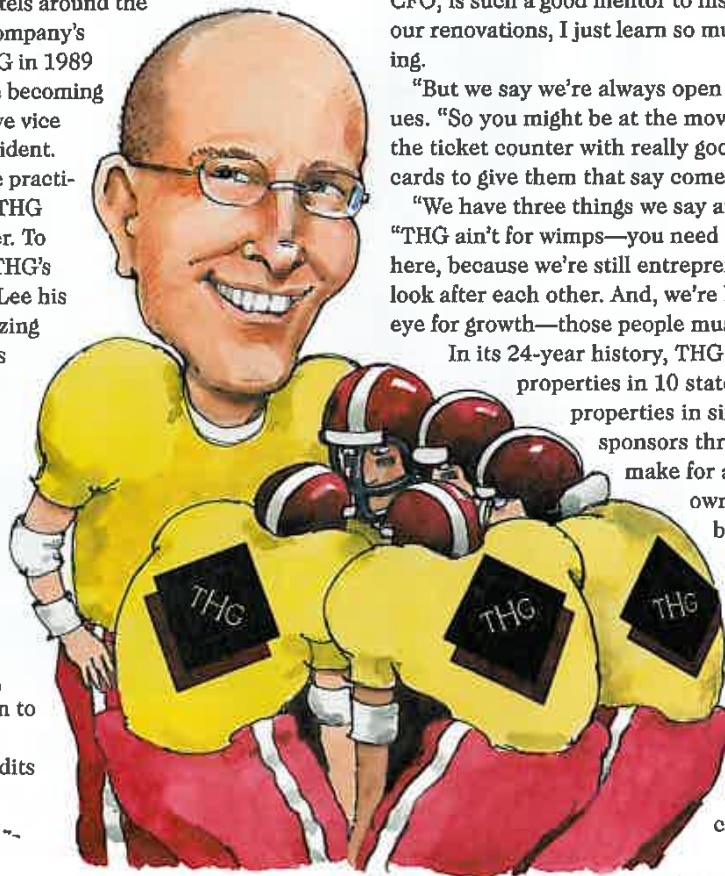
With nearly 1,300 employees, Douglas N. Dreher manages to maintain a special esprit de corps at The Hotel Group

Doug Dreher was 16 when he met reality. Any jobs the 43-year-old Dreher had as a kid never went beyond mowing grass and delivering newspapers in his hometown of Edmonds, Washington. When he was 16, his father told him to get a job. It could have been any job, but Dreher took a job washing dishes in a restaurant called Mr. Steak. Like anyone else who has washed dishes, Dreher quickly plotted his escape to the front of house, as a server, which proved to be just the right exposure needed to hook Dreher on hospitality.

Later, at the 1,474-room Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, Dreher got a full dose of high-adrenaline operations working in a variety of departments before becoming assistant manager. Back in Edmonds, Dreher's older brother worked in the F&B department of a moderately sized owner and manager of full- and select-service hotels around the country. Persuaded of the company's potential, Dreher joined THG in 1989 as a general manager, before becoming a regional manager, executive vice president and, in 2002, president.

For an intensely idealistic practitioner of the lodging trade, THG was the perfect fit for Dreher. To this day, Dreher considers THG's chairman/CEO Edmond A. Lee his mentor. "He's a man of amazing values, for whom integrity is doing the right thing, even when nobody is watching," Dreher says. "We all have family values—we care for each other, and though we may not always get along, we learn to work through things."

That's also how Dreher explains his success—carefully choosing his team, developing it and hanging on to it. Few conversations with Dreher get far before he credits the people around him: "My COO, Lara Latture, is one tough lady. Molly



■■■ CLOSE UP ■■■

Title:	President, The Hotel Group Edmonds, Washington
Residence:	Edmonds, Washington
Family:	Wife, two children
Education:	B.A. Hotel & Restaurant Administration, Washington State University
Philosophy:	"Values are key. Those closest to the leader determine the success of the leader."
Activities:	Time with family: golf (usually alone and poorly); past chairman, Washington Hotel & Lodging Association; current chairman, AHLA Multi-Unit Operations Council
Last Book Read:	The Looming Tower by Lawrence Wright
Last Movie Seen:	Cinderella Man (DVD)
Hotel Dislikes:	When my key doesn't work in the door; hair in the bathroom.
Hotel Likes:	I love the people who know name recognition. It counts in every department.

Bruder, my assistant, has all the details and Randy Meyer, our CFO, is such a good mentor to his team, and Rob Lee, who runs our renovations, I just learn so much from him when I'm traveling.

"But we say we're always open for business," Dreher continues. "So you might be at the movies and see someone behind the ticket counter with really good hospitality skills—we have cards to give them that say come work for us."

"We have three things we say at our company," Dreher says. "THG ain't for wimps—you need an indefatigable spirit to work here, because we're still entrepreneurial. THG is a family—we look after each other. And, we're best in class—we hire with an eye for growth—those people must be able to grow."

In its 24-year history, THG has managed more than 104 properties in 10 states. Today, there are 26 properties in six states. The company sponsors three investment funds that make for an interesting future in ownership, Dreher says. "We've become more complex because of the real estate side. We've hit a nice sweet spot with 25 to 30 hotels, maybe 35. But if we get bigger than that, we lose our family culture. It would be the same number of hotels but the scope and magnitude of them will continue to grow."