



Belinda Kuan
官曉霓

Signature Homes General Manager
Signature Homes 總經理

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Belinda Kuan: Establishing TOWNPLACE, a brand catering for millennials' living needs

官曉霓：迎合新世代對「家」的需求
創立「TOWNPLACE本舍」品牌

"Millennials place great value on lifestyle and living experiences. They put apartment layout and flexible leasing terms before the amount of living space." According to Signature Homes General Manager Belinda Kuan, the living preferences of millennials are quite different, so last year the Group created a new brand, called TOWNPLACE, to provide unconventional residential leasing services tailored for them.

Establishing a new brand to capture opportunities from millennials

Statistics show that there are about 80 million globally mobile individuals, and counting. "Hong Kong is an international city, which attracts talent from around the world. Market demand is enormous," said Belinda. She also said that over time, millennials have given new momentum to the residential leasing market. As a result, late last year, the Group created TOWNPLACE, a new residential leasing brand, with a focus on millennial customers.

Belinda revealed that during the early stage of brand development, the team carried out research on the home preferences of millennials. "We found that millennials prioritize convenient location for travelling to work. They also follow lifestyle trends and look for a good living

experience, so they seek versatility in the surrounding facilities. The TOWNPLACE brand comprises two properties, TOWNPLACE KENNEDY TOWN and TOWNPLACE SOHO, respectively located in Kennedy Town and Soho, Central. Both locations are popular among millennials because they enjoy close proximity to MTR stations, commercial districts, traditional shops and Western-style stores, blending East and West and satisfying the needs of millennial tenants," she said.

Flexible and personalized

TOWNPLACE provides different layouts for tenants' choice, ranging from studios to four-bedroom apartments. According to Belinda, as the majority of millennials live by themselves or with a partner, the two properties feature primarily exquisite one-bedroom apartments

with a flexible and practical layout. Equipped with multi-functional furniture and ample concealed storage space, the apartments keep pace with the minimalistic furnishing trend while meeting residents' practical needs. "To promote TOWNPLACE SOHO, we further enhanced leasing flexibility by providing tenants with three housing options – serviced apartments, furnished apartments, and unfurnished apartments for tenants who wish to move in with their own furniture. Also, we offer two chic furniture brands with different styles for them to choose from," said Belinda. In addition, TOWNPLACE offers flexible leasing terms from one month to two years, so that tenants can decide on the appropriate lease term based on the length of their stay in Hong Kong.

A Duo Social Space tailored to the millennial community

The popularity of the sharing concept has been growing in recent years, giving rise to millennials' interest in making like-minded friends in shared space. One of the unique qualities of TOWNPLACE is that residents of TOWNPLACE KENNEDY TOWN and TOWNPLACE SOHO can share the two locations' facilities. "The two properties have different amenities, so residents of both can enjoy an even more diverse service experience, which is quite rare in the market," said Belinda.

To facilitate interaction between residents of the two projects, TOWNPLACE's Community Managers organize various activities so that residents can get to know one another and broaden their social circle. "We understand that young people tend to make new friends using social media. So our tenants can join MY TOWN, an interactive community in TOWNPLACE's exclusive mobile app, to meet like-minded 'TOWNERS' to expand their group," she said.

Tech-savvy living experience

Since the young generation often no longer work only in a static office, TOWNPLACE KENNEDY TOWN and TOWNPLACE SOHO are equipped with a high-speed business grade wireless WiFi network to meet tenants' working needs. TOWNPLACE has introduced smart home management to provide tenants with a holistic, convenient way of living. "Along with MY TOWN, a social platform, residents can make use of TOWNPLACE's exclusive mobile app to control household appliances, as an electronic door lock, to receive mailbox alerts, to book property facilities, etc. Residents can also contact our team or Community Managers for assistance anytime via the app," said Belinda.

Residents' trusted friends

The team members are the first friends of many residents during their early days of living and working in Hong Kong. TOWNPLACE starts from the details to establish a close and friendly relationship with tenants. TOWNPLACE frontline staff are dressed in casual attire rather than formal suits, and address residents by their first names. She said with a smile that some colleagues occasionally explore Hong Kong with tenants after work. "They are truly



The young and dynamic TOWNPLACE team provides tenants with friendly, thoughtful service [TOWNPLACE本舍] 年輕兼充滿幹勁的團隊·為租客提供親切貼心的服務

passionate about what they do and they see our residents as good friends," she said.

Belinda said that the team adheres to the Group's pledge to put customers first and provides assistance to meet tenants' needs wherever possible. She recalled that during a typhoon, a tenant who was out of town contacted the team to ask them to move his belongings from the balcony indoors. "At first, we were worried about whether it was appropriate for us to enter the apartment without the tenant's presence. But the tenant told us his door lock password with no hesitation and was very grateful for our help. We are truly trusted by our tenants," she said.

Belinda was delighted to say that the end of a lease term is not necessarily a farewell between the team and the tenants. "Even after our tenants have left Hong Kong, we send them birthday and festive greetings," said Belinda. She revealed that quite a number of former tenants put the Group's properties at top of mind because of trust. When they come to work in Hong Kong again, or when their friends plan to travel to Hong Kong and ask them to recommend a place to stay, they always choose the Group's properties, which helps strengthen and broaden the team's customer network.

Valuing continuous improvement and individual contributions

Belinda is fearless in the face of the residential leasing markets' fierce competition. She listens to customer feedback with an open mind and

often learns from competitors. She said, "We observe what other local and overseas industry players are doing to keep pace with the times. We constantly enhance our products and services to maintain our competitive edge in the market." Belinda has her own management philosophy for building an efficient and cohesive team. "As a team head, I'm responsible for leading the team and making final decisions. However, I regard my teammates not as my subordinates, but as my partners. I encourage my colleagues to contribute their suggestions and ideas about work as much as possible, regardless of their grade or experience with the team," said Belinda. Despite having richer work experience than her subordinates, Belinda said that she has a lot to learn from her young colleagues. "They are much more competent than I am in skills such as social media tactics," she said.

Belinda's secrets to working well with her millennial colleagues is to appreciate, encourage and compliment them from the heart to establish a friendly relationship with the team. According to Belinda, as long as her colleagues can get recognition as part of the team, they will find satisfaction and passion for their work and stay with the company for a longer time. A stable team can of course continuously provide customers with excellent service. "I hope that every team member can receive great development opportunities to improve not only the team but also themselves," she said.

「新世代重視lifestyle和生活體驗，未必需要很大的居住空間，反而更重視單位間隔和租期是否有足夠靈活性。」Signature Homes總經理官曉霓表示，因應新世代對「家」的要求已改變，集團於去年創立了新住宅租賃品牌「TOWNPLACE本舍」，為他們提供切合需要的全新租賃服務。

創立新品牌 迎接新世代機遇

據統計，全球約有8,000萬流動性人口，而且數目還在持續增加。「香港作為國際都會，自然能吸引世界各地的專才前來發展，所以市場需求十分巨大。」官曉霓表示，隨著時代轉變，新世代亦逐漸成為住宅租賃市場的新動力。集團去年底創立的全新住宅租賃品牌「TOWNPLACE本舍」，服務對象正是針對這群新世代客戶。

官曉霓表示，在建立這個品牌初期，團隊曾作研究調查，了解新世代對「家

居」有甚麼要求。「我們發現新世代最看重的是地點，是否便利上班；其次是他們追求lifestyle和體驗生活，故此亦十分重視周邊配套是否具有多樣性。『TOWNPLACE本舍』現有的兩個項目TOWNPLACE KENNEDY TOWN及TOWNPLACE SOHO，分別位處堅尼地城和中環蘇豪，皆是深受新世代喜愛的地點，同樣臨近港鐵站和商業區，而且中西文化交融，附近既有傳統商店，亦有西式小舖，以滿足新世代住客的要求。」

滿足靈活自主的需求

「TOWNPLACE本舍」設有由開放式至四房的不同戶型，供租客選擇。官曉霓稱，考慮到新世代客群大多數是獨居或二人家庭，故兩個項目主要提供一房單位，面積精巧但開則靈活實用。單位配備多功能傢具，並設有不少隱蔽式收納空間，既迎合簡約家居佈置的潮流，亦滿足住客的實際需要。「我們在推

廣TOWNPLACE SOHO時，嘗試進一步提升租賃的靈活性，為住客提供三個選擇：除了服務式住宅外，他們亦可以選擇自置傢俬，或連傢俬租住服務。我們更為租客提供兩個不同品牌的傢俬組合，讓他們選擇喜歡的家居風格。」此外，「TOWNPLACE本舍」提供靈活的租期，短至一個月，長至兩年皆可，住客可因應居港時間長短，選擇合適的租期。

共享優閒空間 創造專屬社群

近年共享概念普及，新世代喜歡在共享空間中交朋結友，尋找志同道合的夥伴。「TOWNPLACE本舍」較獨特之處，是TOWNPLACE KENNEDY TOWN及TOWNPLACE SOHO的住客可以共享項目的設施。「由於兩者的設施不盡相同，變相讓住客可享用更多元化的服務，這安排在市場上較少有的。」



“ Millennials follow lifestyle trends and look for a good living experience. They put a flexible lifestyle before the amount of living space.

新世代追求lifestyle和生活體驗，對他們來說，擁有生活的靈活性更勝空間大小。

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Residents can enjoy a convenient smart living experience with TOWNPLACE's exclusive mobile app 透過「TOWNPLACE本舍」專屬手機應用程式，住客能盡享智能家居管理的種種便捷

為促進兩個項目的住客交流，「TOWNPLACE本舍」團隊更設有 Community Manager，透過舉辦不同活動，讓住客能互相認識，建立更豐富的社交圈子。「此外，我們明白到年輕人習慣利用社交媒體認識新朋友，所以住客更可以透過專屬手機應用程式，加入『TOWNPLACE本舍』互動社區—MY TOWN，讓他們可以結識志趣相投的『TOWNER』，擴闊社交圈子。」

締造智能家居生活

考慮到年輕一代的工作模式不再局限於寫字樓，TOWNPLACE KENNEDY TOWN及TOWNPLACE SOHO配備了商業用級數的高速無線WiFi，以滿足住客的不同需要。此外，「TOWNPLACE本舍」亦積極引入智能家居管理，為住客帶來全方位的便捷生活。「住客專屬手機app除設有上述MY TOWN社交平台功能外，他們亦可利用這個app操控家電設備、當作電子門鎖、接收信箱收件提示，以及預訂項目設施等。當然，住客如需要協助，隨時可以透過它聯絡我們的同事或Community Manager。」

成為住客信任的朋友

團隊成員往往成為不少客人在港工作和生活初期的第一批朋友。「TOWNPLACE本舍」從細節開始，已著意與住客營造朋友般的關係：如前線同事會直接稱呼住客的名字，以及工作時會穿著休閒服，而非西裝或套裝，務求令雙方感覺更加親切。她笑言同事在下班後，會不時相約住客出遊，認識香港。「一方面是基於對工作的熱誠，同時亦因為他們已把住客當成朋友。」

官曉霓表示，本著集團「以客為先」的精神，對於住客的要求，只要是能力範圍以內，同事都會盡量提供協助。她憶述有次遇上颱風，一位正在遠行的住客聯絡他們，希望有同事能替他將陽台的東西搬回室內。「起初我們也擔心若不在場下進入其單位，會否不妥當。但那位住客卻想也不想便告知我們大門密碼，還很感激同事的幫助，可見租客真的很信任我們。」

官曉霓笑稱即使租約完結，與住客的情誼亦不會因此終止：「就算他們離開香港，每逢生日或重要節慶，我們也會向對方送上祝福。」她坦言很多舊租客因為對其團隊的信任，無論是日後再次來港工作，還是向準備到港

的朋友推薦，都是以集團旗下的物業為首選，這亦有助團隊鞏固和擴大客戶網絡。

重視與時並進 肯定同事貢獻

面對競爭激烈的住宅租賃市場，官曉霓認為心態上要無懼競爭，並且虛心聆聽顧客的意見，以及多向同業學習，互相交流：「我們會向本地同業，以至遠赴海外觀摩取經，努力與時並進，提升產品和服務質素，以保持在市場上的優勢。」此外，要建立一支高效和凝聚力強的團隊，官曉霓自有一套管理之道：「作為上司，我當然要負責領導和決策的工作；可是我不會說同事是我的下屬，而會視他們為隊友。所以我鼓勵每位同事，如在工作上有任何意見或想法，就要盡量提出，不用顧慮自己在團隊的職級或年資。」儘管工作上的經歷比下屬豐富，但官曉霓笑言有不少事情都要向年輕同事學習：「例如使用社交媒體，他們絕對比我專業呢！」

從心出發的欣賞、多鼓勵讚賞，跟同事建立朋友般的關係，都是官曉霓與新世代同事相處的「秘訣」。她表示，同事在團隊裡得到認同，找到滿足感，對工作自然更有熱誠，亦樂意留下來工作；團隊的穩定性高，自然能夠為客戶持續提供優質服務。「我希望每個同事都會得到很好的發展機會，令團隊進步之餘，個人亦有所成長。」



Belinda encourages her team and appreciates their efforts to maintain good ties with team members 多鼓勵、多欣賞，是官曉霓與同事的相處之道