



## Delivering the “Wow” Effect

An Interview with Noah Tepperberg,  
Co-Founder, Strategic Group

**EDITORS' NOTE** In 2001, Noah Tepperberg co-founded Strategic Group with partner Jason Strauss. In 2003, he and Strauss founded Strategic Hospitality Group, which offers consumers a premium nightlife experience with their various venues. Current and former spots include Conscious Point, Jet East, and Dune, all in the Hamptons, as well as Luahn, Suite 16, Marquee, AVENUE, and LAVO, all in New York City; TAO at The Venetian and LAVO Restaurant & Nightclub at The Palazzo Hotel, both in Las Vegas; and two Artichoke Pizza locations in New York City. Tepperberg earned an M.B.A. in Business Management from the University of Miami.



Noah Tepperberg

**COMPANY BRIEF** Strategic Group is a lifestyle marketing, special events, consumer promotions, and public relations company that can integrate directly into lifestyle, entertainment, fashion, and nightlife programs, which create and influence popular culture by creating unique brand experiences for consumers. The company ([www.strategicgroup.tv](http://www.strategicgroup.tv)) has worked with global brands like Coca-Cola, Donna Karan, Heineken, LVMH, NASCAR, Reebok, and Yahoo.

**What did you see in the market that made you feel there was a need for Strategic and how did you differentiate the brand?**

When we started Strategic Group, we had an idea we knew was different. There were a lot of companies that would sell lifestyle marketing and PR services, but there were few people in the sector who led that lifestyle and were part of the fabric that creates pop culture. Leveraging our hospitality business, and the access and relationships we accumulated through the years of running nightclubs, restaurants, and events, gave us a competitive advantage when we started the agency.

There were a variety of PR firms that just did publicity, a lot of event companies that put together events from the production side, and a lot of consumer marketing firms. But there wasn't an agency that offered all of those services under one roof. We are able to provide our clients with a tremendous amount of efficiency when it comes to rates, fees, and costs, because they're able to get PR service, event planning, talent procurement,

and consumer sampling, all with one phone call.

The clients we dealt with always said it was a lot of work to manage multiple agencies. So our supermarket approach enables the clients to manage everything with one cohesive team and make one agency accountable for the success of their initiatives.

**You have a way of building facilities that stand the test of time. What is the secret to your success?**

The secret to the longevity of our venues is that we put a lot of time and effort into the planning and creation of the product; we focus on the customer experience, and we deliver that “wow” effect from the service to the atmosphere. The product itself is well-designed and thought out, so it can accommodate the volume and provide the service that comes with that.

We also build our venues in a way that allows us to update them constantly. So whether it's through renovations or improvements, we build them so that, over time, people don't get bored going to the same place. That formula is what has led to our long-term sustainability as a restaurant, nightclub, bar or lounge.

**Is it important for you to remain a certain size or is it a matter of what opportunity fits?**

I don't think size matters when it comes to our organizational structure. We'll shrink and grow to whatever size we need to accommodate whatever capacity of business we need.

For me and my partners, it has always been about taking the right deals, and making sure that every deal we do is a home run. Some restaurateurs have 20 restaurants but only five or six do well. You often find the projects that don't do well are more time consuming than the ones that are home run successes.

So choosing the right deals and trying to sequence them to open in the right time period so we're never too extended at any one time has been a key part of the planning, and that has driven the unanimous success behind all of our venues.

**Some people talk about challenges partnerships can bring. Why does yours work so well?**

I'm fortunate that after 15 years in business, I've been able to find five or six great partners. I had partners I didn't work well with in the beginning and we were able to buy them out and figure out the personality types that work well with mine. The one partner that I've had in all my businesses is Jason Strauss – we have been partners since we were in high school.

Seth Rodsky, who joined us six years ago, is also a partner in everything, and among the three of us, we've done a good job figuring out who the other right partners are.

**Was the entrepreneurial spirit there for you early on?**

I was always torn between working for others and working for myself, and life took its natural course; before I could get to the working for others part, I was running my own business.

But when you have partners, you work for them too. I have to work with, listen to and, in many ways, report to them. So part of the success story is that, even though I don't have anyone telling me when and where I have to be, I feel beholden to the people I do work with.

As an entrepreneur with that spirit, it fosters a good work ethic. I try to instill that in all the people that work with me.

**Do you take the time to appreciate the impact venues like TAO and AVENUE have had or is it always looking ahead?**

At every big event, I always have peak moments where I'm at the top of the stairs looking down or in the office looking at the cameras and I see the sea of people having a great time and I think, look what we did.

Here and there, I hear stories: I met the guy who met his wife at our first club or two guys who met and decided to become partners over a beer at one of our places – stories that make you realize you've done something pretty special.

We're starting to see the façade of Marquee pop up in movies and TAO popping up in TV show story lines, and hearing some of our places mentioned in novels that talk about the '90s in New York City, and I definitely feel the memorialization of what we do. I'm sure as time goes on, we'll see more and more of it. ●

Lavo Exterior (left); Lavo Club (top center); Lavo Restaurant (bottom center); Lavo Bar (right)

