

Like No Other City in the World

An Interview with George A. Fertitta,
Chief Executive Officer, NYC & Company

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming his current post, George Fertitta teamed up with a partner, John Margeotes, to start an advertising agency in the early 70s. For over three decades, Margeotes/Fertitta + Partners handled work for companies like Godiva, Hearst, McGraw-Hill, Campbell Soup, Disney, and Coca-Cola. Margeotes eventually retired from the agency and in 2005 it was merged with Neil Powell's upstart to form Margeotes Fertitta Powell. Fertitta later sold his share in the firm.



George A. Fertitta

He met with then-deputy mayor Dan Doctoroff to discuss the city's promotional plans, a meeting that led to Mayor Bloomberg naming him CEO of NYC & Company in 2006. Bloomberg also put him in charge of two other city promotional groups, NYC Big Events and NYC Marketing.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF As New York City's official marketing, tourism, and partnership organization, the mission of NYC & Company (www.nycgo.com) is to maximize travel and tourism opportunities throughout the five boroughs, build economic prosperity, and spread the dynamic image of New York City around the world. With the launch of major interactive initiatives including nycgo.com and the Official NYC Information Center, NYC & Company is the ultimate resource for visitors and residents to find everything they need to know about what to do and see in New York City.

How much of an impact did New York City feel from the economic crisis and where is it today in regard to recovery?

New York City has been extremely fortunate as we were the last to be hit and the first to come back. We welcomed a record breaking 48.8 million visitors to New York City last year and we expect that number to continue to grow. More than 310,000 jobs were sustained by visitors to NYC last year with total income of \$17.3 billion.

In addition, New York City is expected to reach almost 90,000 hotel rooms by the end of 2011, a nearly 24 percent increase in accommodations since 2008. Even with the hotel growth, demand has remained strong with year-end occupancy rates for 2010 averaging 85 percent with ADR at \$255.

How do you define the key attributes of New York City as a leading tourist destination and how do you work to get the message out worldwide?

New York City is five cities in one: Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. NYC & Company's Marketing and Partnership teams promote the dynamic New York City brand worldwide, highlighting its unparalleled dining, shopping, entertainment, and cultural offerings. The impact of the marketing programs is amplified through collaboration with other NYC & Company departments, including Arts & Culture, Communications, Creative Services, Entertainment, Interactive, Media, Membership, Tourism, and

Sports Marketing. These marketing campaigns, supported by valuable partners such as American Express, American Airlines, Google, the National Geographic Channel, Nickelodeon's *Dora the Explorer*, OpenTable, *Time Out New York*, and Travelocity, position New York City as a must-see snow destination while offering New Yorkers and visitors alike the tools to experience the city in the most accessible and fulfilling manner possible. As a result, 2010 was another fruitful year for both international and domestic tourism, as well as for local economic development.

How have you strengthened marketing efforts in emerging markets and developing countries?

Since 2005, NYC & Company has expanded its global network of offices from five to 18 serving 25 markets in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. The city has increased its market share of overseas visitors from 28 percent to 32 percent, with each share point representing \$600 million in economic impact to New York City. About one third of the increase in visitation in 2010 international arrivals is due to four emerging markets: Australia, China, South Korea, and Brazil. In an effort to promote New York City to a larger audience and expand its global presence, in May, we launched nine international Facebook and Twitter accounts – a first among U.S. destinations.

How has technology impacted the efforts of NYC & Company?

With the launch of major interactive initiatives, including nycgo.com and the Official NYC Information Center, we continue to deepen engagement with our Web site audience while seeking out and cultivating new audiences across social media channels, the mobile space, and beyond. In 2010, we increased our Web site traffic, Twitter followers, and Facebook fans and with the help of our e-commerce partners,

nycgo.com transactions drove \$11.9 million of economic impact to New York City.

Before the end of 2011, we will partner with mobile check-in pioneer foursquare and founding sponsor American Express to incentivize diners to visit restaurants during the extension period of Restaurant Week, and will update the Get More NYC mobile site, which was released last year, as an in-market consumer touchpoint, featuring geo-targeted member offers. Whether we are tinkering with augmented reality or applying the latest geo-fencing technologies to deliver deals, our goal is simple: find visitors wherever they may be and bring them to New York City.

How closely do you work with the business community and corporate leaders of New York City in your efforts?

NYC & Company currently has over 2,000 members from various segments of the tourism and hospitality industry, including hotels, restaurants, retail, attractions, cultural organizations, business services, sightseeing, transportation, recreation, and entertainment. These businesses are the backbone of everything we do from our marketing programs to our Web site and publications to our publicity efforts – our members are the fabric of the city we sell.

In addition to our members, our committee structure was expanded last year under the vision of our chair Emily Rafferty (President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art) and now accounts for committees representing hotels, restaurants, retail, museums, Broadway, and attractions.

What are your key priorities for NYC & Company as you look to the future?

Looking ahead to 2011, we are confident we can continue our success with a range of new and returning campaigns and initiatives including the perennially popular NYC Restaurant Week, Fashion's Night Out, Broadway Week, Off-Broadway Week, and Get More NYC.

As always, we will look at new ways to extend our reach to connect with potential visitors.

NYC & Company is proud to contribute positively to the prosperity of our members, to the tourism and hospitality industry, and to the city of New York, and we will continue to work tirelessly to raise the bar even higher. New York City offers exceptional, unforgettable experiences to visitors and we strive to remind people of all the reasons why they need to return again and again. We want them to know what we've always known: that there is no other city like this in the world. ●