



A Residential Feel on Wall Street

An Interview with
Jeffrey Miller, General Manager, Andaz Wall Street



EDITORS' NOTE Jeffrey Miller took on his current role in 2012. He has 23 years of experience with Hyatt Hotels & Resorts. Miller has held leadership positions at properties such as Park Hyatt Los Angeles and Grand Hyatt New York. Before joining Andaz Wall Street, he oversaw the successful rebranding of the Hyatt at The Bellevue. At Andaz Wall Street, he has overseen the renovation and reopening of the hotel's Concourse Level. Miller graduated on the Dean's Honor Role from California State University, Sacramento. He holds Bachelors of Arts degrees in International Business and German from the School of Public Administration.



Jeffrey Miller

PROPERTY BRIEF The David Rockwell-designed Andaz Wall Street (www.andazwallstreet.com) features 253 guest rooms starting at a generous 345 square feet, making them some of the largest hotel rooms in New York City. Andaz offers a variety of on-site amenities, including over 10,000 square feet of event space, complimentary WiFi and mini bars with non-alcoholic beverages and snacks, a 24-hour gym, and The SPA. Patrons can enjoy seasonal, farm-to-table cuisine at Wall & Water and sample classic pre-prohibition era cocktails at Bar Seven Five.

Are you content with how well the Andaz Wall Street has been received by the market?

Looking forward for Andaz, we realized that we were starting out on a new path with a new customer. Customers like things packaged together, so we decided on items like Internet and mini-bar inclusions, and arrival amenities. Guests want to pay one price and be set for the remainder of their stay.

This is what has driven the Andaz concept – making it easy for the consumer. We wanted to take a more friendly residential experience and translate that into the hotel experience starting with the elimination of the concept of arriving at a traditional front desk. Our hosts, who are your initial point of contact, do everything for you. They take care of you throughout your stay.

How broad is your consumer market in terms of the type of guest Andaz is targeting?

The consumer is always based on the local market, so within the downtown Manhattan market, it's financial, insurance, and leisure on

weekends. We gear weekends towards the wedding market and the social event market.

Are there similarities between this property and the Fifth Avenue property or is each distinct?

The core pillars of Andaz exist, so this means the values we have as a brand, although we do look at each local market. Fifth Avenue is geared towards fashion and the midtown businesses; our property was designed around the mindset of downtown, Wall Street financial – this is ingrained in our design.

How important is the rebuilding of downtown Manhattan to the success of this property?

In the next two years, downtown Manhattan will be the next midtown. It's the only area that has a lot of strength and development with the World Trade site. There is retail and theater, as well as a residential population that has doubled over the past five years and will continue to grow as new residential properties come online.

How have you designed the mix of suites and other rooms?

The benefits of being downtown is that we have more space. Our building was a financial institution previously, so we have high ceilings and big windows, and our smallest room is just over 345 square feet.

We have 45 suites so it gives a good mix to our 253 guest rooms. We can sell suites on the weekends when the leisure business demands it or we can use them for corporate meetings during the week.

How difficult is it to be successful with your food and beverage product when there are so many great stand-alone restaurants in the area?

With Andaz, we always look to create restaurants and experiences that are based on the local cuisine. For us, Wall & Water represents the farm-to-table American cuisine experience. Our bar is geared towards the businessperson during the weekdays, and on weekends, we can gear towards the leisure aspect with our beer garden and outdoor space. Our plaza allows us to do events to promote downtown.

We want our restaurants to be part of the local community and not strictly for hotel guests.

How have you approached your fitness and spa offering?

The fitness and spa are very important components, but the trend now is to do more in-room

treatments. We feel that, again, brings people back to the residential experience.

Is your event focus mainly high-level, intimate meetings?

During the week, it will be more boardroom-style corporate meetings. Lately, we note that firms want to return to getting together so that might be up to 150 people.

On the weekends, we want to be an event destination so we will have events for 250 to 400 people.

How far have you gone with technology and how do you balance it to avoid losing the human interaction?

The new traveler is tech driven, so we deploy any technology that makes it better for the consumer.

Our goal is that the guest will eventually arrive at the hotel and have a device that will be in his possession so that he can go directly to his room if he prefers. If he wants the interaction with a host, he can still do that, as well.

Has the New York market fully recovered, especially with regard to rates?

Demand is back and we're seeing occupancy levels similar to 2008 before the recession hit. But we are still behind our ADR goals which we need for performance to meet the demands of the asset.

Is the GM more of a generalist today?

Our role as GMs is complex. The goal is to get out of the way of our colleagues and let them do their jobs, because they are professionals and best know what our guests are looking for. I see myself as more of a coach and less as someone giving direction, because we have a great team and Andaz is a great brand and attracts the best people.

The best part of it for us is the interaction we have with our guests, so this is where we have to spend more time.

How critical is it to have owners with a long-term vision for the property?

The owner relationship must be just as strong as the one with our colleagues, employees, and customers.

Can you ever get away from the business?

It's not possible, but we integrate it into our lives. People have to have the hospitality blood to survive and enjoy it. I enjoy getting feedback from guests on a weekend. I don't see it as work, but as part of who I am. ●

Andaz Wall Street Large King guest room (left) and lounge (right)