

Hospitality

The Next Generation of Luxury Hospitality

An Interview with Lisa A. Potts,
Senior Vice President-Sales and Marketing, Trump Hotel Collection



The Old Post Office Building in Washington, D.C.

EDITORS' NOTE Lisa Potts assumed her current role in 2013. The 25-year hospitality industry veteran was previously with Starwood Hotels and Resorts where her career ascended to the role of Regional Vice President of Sales and Marketing; there, she oversaw hotels comprising of nine brands under the Starwood umbrella located in key markets throughout North America.



Lisa A. Potts

COMPANY BRIEF The premiere property of the Trump Hotel Collection, the iconic Trump International Hotel & Tower New York (www.trumphotelcollection.com/central-park) is the only Forbes Five Star and AAA Five Diamond Hotel with a Five-Star, Five-Diamond (and also Michelin Three-Star and New York Times Four-Star) restaurant, Jean-Georges. Steps from the Time Warner Center and Lincoln Center, the 52-story structure has 176 luxurious guest rooms and suites, complete with European-style kitchens, marble bathrooms, and exceptional views of Central Park and the Manhattan skyline.

How has the Trump Hotel Collection evolved since its inception?

For decades, the company has been in the business of developing and managing luxury hospitality and real estate assets. The Trump family launched the Trump Hotel Collection in 2007 to build upon the success of the Central Park property.

We consider the Trump Hotel Collection to be the next generation of luxury hospitality, led by the up-and-coming generation of Trumps, who have reinvented the luxury hotel experience. Don Jr., Ivanka, and Eric Trump, are all involved daily in the vision and success of the Trump Hotel Collection.

We have great locations in key markets like New York, Toronto, Chicago, Las Vegas, Waikiki, Panama, and Miami, where we are in the process of repositioning the Doral Golf Resort, which has been rebranded as Trump National Doral Miami.

We recently unveiled the architectural and design plans for the redevelopment of the Old Post Office building in D.C. Our plan is to infuse new life into the building and the surrounding area, while preserving the character and history of the landmark.

We also just announced Trump Vancouver, which is slated to open in 2016. We definitely have an eye on continued growth.

With each property, is it about representing the Trump brand or about what works in each market?

Based on the destination, there are things we will do to ensure the hotel is indigenous to that particular area. However, a consistent thread in our hotels is the residential feel throughout the building. It's a luxurious experience but without pretense. Our lobbies are not vast – we make a point to remember our guests and our associates come from behind the desk to welcome them back. We want our hotel guests to feel like they live in the building.

Many of our buildings are a combination of residential and hotel – most of our rooms are designed with kitchens or partial kitchens, and they're very spacious.

This residential aesthetic is a unique positioning within the luxury tier.

How have you found the right mix for food and beverage?

A world-class dining experience is really a cornerstone of a luxury hotel, and this is an expectation from our guests.

We have a great partnership with Jean-Georges at Trump International Hotel & Tower New York. He engages our guests very well, and we offer incredible culinary experiences, like master courses where you can do a cooking class with Jean-Georges. These experiences are a differentiator.

We have some other amazing restaurants throughout the Trump Hotel Collection, such as Koi at the Trump SoHo, BLT Steak in Waikiki and the recently announced BLT Prime at the Trump National Doral in Miami.

Sixteen, our signature restaurant at Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago, was recently awarded Two Stars from Michelin Guide, one of only four restaurants to earn this award for 2014.

We are very collaborative with our partners, and we work closely with them in terms of marketing the restaurant so it's also successful within the neighboring community.

Is it important in the luxury market to offer that total spa product?

A great spa is integral to a luxury property.

We launched a program early in 2013 called TRUMP Wellness, which is focused on a few areas, including nutritious dining options. It also provides options for those who have dietary restrictions: we have gluten-free, vegan, and vegetarian options, for instance, with complete nutritional values noted on the in-room dining menus. This is becoming something guests expect.

Another part of the program is Quick Bites, which is an express in-room menu that features health-wise options that can be delivered within 15 minutes or less.

The third component of TRUMP Wellness is Travel Fit, where we provide very high quality workout attire, sneakers, pre-programmed iPods, yoga mats – whatever you need to maintain your healthy regimen while you're traveling.

Our spas tie into our guests' overall wellness regimen. Many are adjacent to our fitness centers and saltwater pool areas, and many offer wellness programs. The majority of our hotels have our signature brand, The Spa at Trump.

In 2014, we are planning to launch a new spa brand: Mar-A-Lago Spa by Ivanka Trump, which will take the spa experience to another level.

How much can you integrate the technology without losing the personal touch?

We are very deliberate in where we invest in technology; we make sure it has a positive impact on the guest experience and ideally has a strong return on investment.

As an example, we have an opportunity to create a more seamless experience for visitors to our Web site using mobile devices. Guests want multiple options to book, so we are implementing responsive technology.

This technology will be more cost-effective to update and will ensure consistency in all content across various platforms, regardless of the device being used.

We have avoided putting iPads in guest rooms because we find our travelers have their own iPads with all of their preferred apps. We just want to provide options. We don't want to lose the personal touch with our customers.

What defines a luxury experience today?

To be considered luxury, it's about that personal touch, the ability to make a guest feel special by truly understanding his/her personal preferences.

We're obsessed with personal recognition and individualized service. This was the genesis behind launching our Trump Card Privileges Program. This program provides a means of understanding the personal preferences of our guests so that we can deliver a customized experience across our portfolio.

Our Trump Attaché teams are dedicated to taking that personal preference information, and preparing for a personalized guest experience before the guest even arrives. ●