

Hospitality

Creating Amazing Experiences

An Interview with Chris Flatt,
Executive Vice President-Hotel Sales & Marketing, Wynn Las Vegas



Wynn and Encore Las Vegas

EDITORS' NOTE Chris Flatt has held her current post since 2002. Prior to this, she was Vice President of Sales for Bellagio from 1997.

COMPANY BRIEF Wynn and Encore Las Vegas (wynnlasvegas.com) are two luxury hotel and casino resorts on the Las Vegas Strip. The iconic travel destinations are operated by international resort developer Wynn Resorts, recipient of more Forbes Travel Guide Five Star Awards than any other independent hotel



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company in the world. Wynn Las Vegas opened on April 28, 2005 and has been recognized as the best resort in Nevada on Condé Nast Traveler's "Gold List" for five consecutive years. The resort features 2,714 lavish guest rooms and suites, more than 111,000 square feet of state-of-the-art casino space, 14 casual and fine dining restaurants, a spa and salon, and an on-site Ferrari and Maserati dealership and 18-hole golf course. Wynn Las Vegas is also home to "Le Rêve—The Dream," an award-winning theatrical experience blending aerial acrobatics, provocative choreography, powerful performances, and elaborate effects. Encore, an expansion of Wynn Las Vegas, opened on December 22, 2008. Featuring an additional 2,034 all-suite accommodations, a 72,000-square-foot casino, five restaurants, and a spa and salon, Encore is located adjacent to Wynn Las Vegas. Combined, the two resorts boast four distinct nightlife and day club experiences, approximately 283,000 square feet of meeting space, and 98,000 square feet of retail space.

What is it that makes this property so unique?

Mr. Wynn, the brand itself, and our having the opportunity to build the types of buildings we have provides an experience for our guests that is beyond what anyone else has been able to do.

I have been with Mr. Wynn for 28 years. I had the opportunity to get in on the ground floor and to build and open properties along the way. A lot of time and effort goes into studying each property from the guest perspective. This attention to detail is what sets us apart.

Is it tough to differentiate in the Las Vegas market and is it essential to have a strong brand name?

Having the Wynn name on the building is a key differentiator. We built many of the properties that we compete against now. Las Vegas

has continued to reinvent itself and as soon as we've created something new, we immediately begin working to create the next best thing.

Las Vegas is a unique market and we have the opportunity to do things here that can't be done elsewhere. We can spend the kind of money on these properties that, in most places, would not make sense.

How broad is the customer base for a property like Wynn?

It's definitely top-tier, but when you have a 4,700-room hotel, you also have to attract a broad group. We have a mix of business: our convention business is a big part of what we do, but we also attract a lot of leisure travelers and those who come to enjoy our casino. We also attract direct business through our call center and website.

So we have a variety of customers, but all are looking for a luxury experience. Customers have high expectations of us.

How important is your corporate business to the property's success?

It is our foundation – we book corporate business years out in many cases. At Wynn, our natural customers tend to be more corporate. We are focused on making sure that those customers want to continue to be with us. Our repeat business in the convention segment is very high.

What size convention do you cater to?

We handle everything, from a small 25-person meeting to a large 3,000-person meeting, and we pay equal attention to each of those. We have an advantage between Wynn and Encore in that the two hotels connect, allowing us to connect the meeting space, which is great for larger groups. We also have different levels of meeting room products that we can provide our attendees from a standard room up to the board or CEO level.

From product to service, the people that work here take pride in their jobs and in making sure every guest has a perfect experience.

How closely do you coordinate the business of the two properties?

When it comes to how we connect our two properties, we operate as one. The employees here are attuned to everything that goes on in our building, from Mr. Wynn to our President to the line-level employees that are caring for our guests.

When you deal with these large buildings, it takes a lot of effort and coordination to make things happen flawlessly.

How challenging is it to find the talent you need with all the competition in Las Vegas?

We have a lot of experienced people who have been in the business for years. We are focused on promoting from within, so we grow our teams organically. This has been a benefit to us because, when we do bring people up from within, they already understand our culture.

It's important to find people who truly care about what our customers receive in terms of our service and commitment. People who, when our customers meet them, can instantly establish a feeling of trust.

As our guests share what they're looking to achieve during their visit, we will be right alongside them, making sure that happens. We want to understand what their goals are and we want to accomplish those goals.

We partner with our customers and make sure that we deliver on everything they're looking for. Finding people who take personal pride in accomplishing this is really important.

Is diversity a key part of the culture?

As a company, we have always been very focused on diversity. We have quite a few women on the executive team. There is generally a lot of opportunity for women and minorities in this industry.

Are you still amazed to see what Las Vegas has become?

I walk into this building every morning and I'm always amazed by all that is going on – it makes me very proud every time I look around and see, touch, and feel everything that our customers have the opportunity to enjoy here; all the things we offer at Wynn leads to amazing experiences.

There is so much to do in Las Vegas that you can't see, do, or experience in any other city, and it's only growing. We have weathered the recession and business is back. We're all seemingly doing well and, based on the new projects coming into the city, it's going to be great for Las Vegas.

In the early days, could you have imagined you would have spent your career here?

Once I began to work with Mr. Wynn, and to understand our company and culture, I realized I could never go anywhere else and, as a result, I have had the chance to be a part of some of the amazing things we have done. ●