



## Connections and Convenience



The Conrad New York entrance (left) and lobby (above)

An Interview with  
**Robert Rechtermann, General Manager, Conrad New York**

**EDITORS' NOTE** Robert Rechtermann arrived at Conrad New York following a four-year run as General Manager of the Five Star, Five Diamond Peninsula New York. Previously, Rechtermann held a range of management-level positions including Resident Manager of The Peninsula Chicago; Director of Operations at The Ritz-Carlton, Boston Common; EAM F&B at The Ritz-Carlton, Boston Common; EAM F&B at the Five Diamond Hilton Short Hills; Director of Food & Beverage at Shutters on the Beach in Santa Monica, California; and Director of Food & Beverage at Hilton Long Beach. He holds a B.S. in hotel management from Fairleigh Dickinson University.



Robert Rechtermann

**PROPERTY BRIEF** In March 2012, Conrad New York ([conradnewyork.com](http://conradnewyork.com)) opened its doors in New York City's Battery Park City neighborhood. Rising 16 stories along the Hudson River waterfront, the 463 all-suite luxury hotel is the first New York location for Conrad Hotels & Resorts, the global luxury brand of Hilton Worldwide. The Conrad New York features spacious suites, each outfitted with integrated technology, flat-screen televisions, and individual climate control. The hotel features a seasonal rooftop bar with breathtaking views of the Statue of Liberty and New York Harbor. The hotel boasts over 30,000 square feet of adaptable meeting space, including the 6,200 square-foot Gallery Ballroom. The Conrad New York was awarded a LEED Gold Certificate for new construction from the U.S. Green Building Council for sustainable building practices and design.

**Would you talk about the vision for Conrad New York as a destination and are you happy with the progress you're seeing?**

Yes. In the three years I've been here involved in this project, the amount of foot traffic in this area seems to have doubled. This is partially due to our hotel and the restaurants we have put in, but also due to the new tenants that are coming in next door as the last few residential buildings have filled up. There is a great mix of people; it's not just the businesspeople here during the week and the

people who are here for leisure, but also people who live in the area as well. We're part of a neighborhood in Battery Park/Lower Manhattan and it is home to some of the most expensive real estate in New York City now. When the construction is completed next door at Brookfield Place, the shops and tenants that will move in there will be life-changing again for this area. You will have world-class shopping that is comparable to Fifth Avenue, and it will create a city within a city in Lower Manhattan. It's

a great blend of business, leisure, shopping, and travel.

**Who do you look at as your competitive set?**

In the hotel business now, you would be short sighted to only look at the hotels you think you compete with.

We compete on any given day of the week with a variety of hotels. The business travelers' expectations have changed as have those of the leisure traveler, so who we compete with changes on a daily basis.

We're focused not only on what our competitive set is doing but we have to look at all of the different properties and how they're doing since there are so many brands.

**Is it harder to forecast in terms of booking today?**

The traveler has many more options on how to book and when to book, and they're waiting for that last-minute opportunity – it's no different than buying a car.

The customer has an advantage in those choices so the market is a bit more short-term than we would like sometimes, but we've adapted to that over the years.

**Are rates strong at this point?**

The rates are coming back slowly. This area downtown still needs to see all of its construction completed so the rates will come back and start to be comparable to Midtown Manhattan.

Occupancy is very strong in this downtown market, so the only opportunity growth now is rate.

With the shift in demographics here from what used to be a financial district to what is now a vibrant community with great shopping and great restaurants, the rates can only go up.

**How do you define the Conrad brand?**

Conrad stands for smart luxury, connections, customizing stays, and technology, among other things.

The Conrad New York has really helped to create far greater brand awareness within the U.S. for the brand. We're supported by great brand awareness in Asia and increasing brand awareness in Europe with the Conrad London St. James, which opened recently.

We still have some room to grow in the States and there are a lot of exciting opportunities that the company is looking at.

**Is true luxury today mostly about service?**

It is. It's also about connections and convenience. We are very proud of the Conrad Concierge application where people can use their iPhone or the TV in their room to order services. They can check in via the Conrad Concierge app and let people know what time they're arriving at the hotel and what, for instance, they would like to have ready for dinner when they arrive.

Luxury today is often defined by reducing the amount of time it takes to get things while improving the convenience of a hotel stay. Some people like personalized service where they really have a connection with a person and some people just like to be able to order things through an application, and that is luxury for them – it's all about individual perception.

The customers' expectations have changed over the years and while some people still prefer traditional service options, others prefer the ease of staying at a hotel like the Conrad where we can adapt to their expectations.

**How important is it to find the balance where you don't lose personal touch while still providing the benefits of technology?**

We have to adapt ourselves to the customer. The business traveler during the week really wants a quick and efficient check-in experience, to be offered a great product and a great night's sleep, and all that comes with that.

Then there are the family, weekend, and other leisure travelers who want more of that personalized service through interactions with the concierge or front-desk. We have to meet all expectations. ●