

## The Guest Experience

An Interview with  
Noah Tepperberg, Co-Founder, The TAO Group



TAO Downtown at Ninth Avenue and 16th Street in Manhattan

**EDITORS' NOTE** Noah Tepperberg and his partners are the masterminds behind some of the most successful nightclub and restaurant brands to open over the past decade, including Marquee, TAO, Avenue, and Lavo. Former hot spots include Southampton staples Conscious Point, Jet East, and Dune, as well as Manhattan boîtes Luahn and Suite 16. In 2003, Tepperberg and Strauss opened Marquee nightclub in New



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York City. Soon thereafter, the duo partnered with TAO founders Marc Packer and Rich Wolf to open TAO at The Venetian in Las Vegas. They followed the tremendous success of TAO Las Vegas by opening LAVO Restaurant & Nightclub at The Palazzo Hotel Casino Resort in Las Vegas and added partner Lou Abin to the TAO Group in 2008. In May of 2009 they introduced AVENUE in New York's trendy Chelsea neighborhood. In September 2010, they opened LAVO Restaurant & Nightclub in New York. Together with his TAO Group partners, Tepperberg opened Marquee Nightclub & Dayclub at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas on New Year's Eve 2011. In June 2011, they launched Dream Downtown Hotel in New York City. In March 2012, Tepperberg and his TAO Group partners made their first foray into international territory with the debut of Marquee at The Star Casino & Hotel in Sydney, Australia. In September 2013, the group once again raised the bar on nightlife with the introduction of TAO Downtown in New York City. Tepperberg is also a partner with Strauss, Francis Garcia, and Sal Basille in a chain of popular pizzerias, Artichoke Basille's. Tepperberg earned a B.B.A. degree in Business Management from the University of Miami.

**COMPANY BRIEF** The TAO Group (TAOgroup.com) is a leading restaurant and nightlife company that develops, owns, and operates many of the most successful food, beverage, and nightlife entertainment venues in the United States. Partners Marc Packer, Richard Wolf, Noah Tepperberg, and Jason Strauss bring decades of hospitality experience to the brand portfolio. Currently, TAO Group boasts operations in New York City, Las Vegas, and Sydney, Australia. In

New York City, the collection includes Arlington Club, Avenue, Avra, Beauty & Essex, LAVO Italian Restaurant and Nightclub, Marquee Nightclub, Rue 57, The Stanton Social, TAO Asian Bistro Uptown, and TAO Asian Bistro Downtown. Additionally, they operate all of the food and beverage outlets of the Dream Downtown hotel including room service, Ph-D Rooftop, Electric Room Lounge, and Bodega Negra. Las Vegas operations include TAO Asian Bistro, Nightclub & Beach at The Venetian, LAVO Italian

Restaurant & Lounge at The Palazzo, and Marquee Nightclub & Dayclub at The Cosmopolitan. Marquee Nightclub at The Star—Sydney represents the company's first international offering. TAO Group regularly brings the brands to additional markets via pop-up venues at noted events such as the Sundance Film Festival and The Olympics, among others.

**You and your partners have founded some of the most successful nightclub and restaurant brands that exist today. Would you provide an overview of the brands and what has made each so special?**

The primary brands we own and operate are Marquee, TAO, Lavo, Avenue, Stanton Social, Vandal, and Beauty & Essex. We have other venues/brands like the seven outlets we operate in the two Dream Hotels in Manhattan, and a chain of Artichoke Pizza joints. All of these brands are special in their own way.

**Where do you see growth opportunities for the brands and are you focused on specific markets for expansion?**

We see tremendous opportunity in our hometown of New York, as well as in our second home, Las Vegas. We plan on expanding to new markets for the first time in a few years. In addition to projects in New York City and Vegas, we will be announcing projects in Los Angeles and Chicago for 2016. We are also looking at international opportunities for 2017 and 2018 in markets like London, Dubai, and Singapore.

**Your restaurant brands are known for their lifestyle and entertainment components, but you have placed major focus on the quality of the food offering. Is this**

**well-understood and how do you build awareness of the strength of your food product when there is so much of a focus on the entertainment component?**

Our chef partners Ralph Scamardella (TAO & Lavo) and Chris Santos (Beauty & Essex, Vandal, Stanton Social) are culinary wizards. Under their guidance, our kitchens put out thousands of great dishes a week. They are committed to using the highest quality ingredients and have teams of great chefs like John Villa, Josh Deloach, Marc Marone, and Mike Armstrong (to name a few) who help them come up with inventive and unique dishes regularly. We rely heavily on digital marketing to promote the quality culinary offerings at all of our venues and the rest is our "secret sauce" (no pun intended).

**What are the keys to staying relevant as a nightclub or restaurant and to having a sustainable, long-term brand?**

Focusing on the guest experience is the key to long-term success in our business. Our company has a unique culture, which fosters a very hands-on and friendly approach to how we treat each and every guest that comes through our doors. The attention to detail in all of our venues starts "at the rope" and ends with a "Thank you for coming." We invest a lot of time in training our teams and in doing customer recovery in the rare cases when things go wrong.

**What has made the partnership with your co-founders work so well and how do you each focus your efforts in the business?**

There are four principal partners in our group (Jason Strauss, Marc Packer, Rich Wolf, and myself). In addition to us four, we have over a dozen managing partners. We are all great friends and enjoy a family-like relationship since, in one way or another, everyone on our senior team has worked with some form of the group for between 10 and 25 years. We all "stay in our lanes" and focus on what each partner does best but also come together as a group (via daily calls and weekly meetings) to make sure we are making the decisions that need to be made as a group together. Communication among partners is important but respecting each others' free/family time is as well. ●