



Personalized Service

An Interview with Suzie Mills,
General Manager, Trump International
Hotel & Tower New York



A Deluxe King with a Central Park view (left);
Jean-Georges dining area (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Suzie Mills has served on the management team of the award-winning Trump International Hotel & Tower New York since pre-opening in 1996. Mills was promoted to General Manager in 2006, becoming the youngest GM in New York City. Beginning her hospitality career working at her parents' hotel in Wales at the age of 10, she has been honored as one of Crain's New York's prestigious "40 Under 40" and earned her property the AAA Five Diamond Award and the Forbes Travel Guide Five Star Award.



Suzie Mills

PROPERTY BRIEF The premiere property of the Trump Hotel Collection, the iconic Trump International Hotel & Tower New York (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.

Where does the travel market stand today, particularly for Trump International Hotel & Tower New York?

Last year, we had the best year we have ever had since opening. We were very fortunate in our positioning, especially as it was a challenging time with several new hotels coming into the market. Much of our success can be attributed to coming out of the gate strong with a good first quarter and building on that for the rest of the year.

From a competitive set, are guests who stay with you doing so for your specific location?

Our hotel is perfectly positioned where Central Park meets Columbus Circle, providing tremendous park views, and just blocks from Lincoln Center and the center of Broadway theater. Travelers are now requesting to be near Central Park and positioned on Manhattan's West Side, which is a shift from the traditional East Side hotel. The neighborhood has changed with the addition of The Time Warner building

and its shops and restaurants, and several other new hotels in the vicinity.

The Trump Hotel Collection has experienced strong growth in great markets. How important is that to your property and how close is coordination from a branding point of view?

The growth of Trump Hotels is incredibly important because each new opening creates more awareness for our brand, and adds more salespeople to the market promoting what it means to be a Trump Hotel. In addition to our on-property sales team, there is now a global sales force helping to promote the entire collection, which naturally helps each individual property. Our team works closely with the corporate team on branding, which is an advantage of being located in New York City along with the corporate office.

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Is there commonality among Trump hotels more so in terms of guest experience as opposed to property characteristics?

Yes. We want to have the same culture, luxury amenities, and unwavering service standards throughout all properties. Signature programs such as Trump Attache, Trump Pets, and Trump Kids can be found in every hotel. Each of the individual buildings are very iconic to the cities they're in and have design features to reflect their locations. This sets us apart from a lot of other hotel collections where, when you go into one hotel, it looks just like the others. With Trump Hotels, one literally knows the city he's in because the buildings are iconic to the cities.

How critical has the suite product been for you?

We're very fortunate with the positioning of the hotel, the fact that we're right on Central Park and suites make up the majority of our room count. We have unobstructed views, and we take up the entire city block so there is no room in the entire hotel that is looking at a brick wall which, in New York, is fairly unique. Whether they are traveling for business or leisure, many people tend to bring their families when they travel, so suites are ideal for them. We have the ability to make three- and four-bedroom suites which suits, large families very well.

We're also the only five-star hotel with full kitchens in each suite. Many people spend more time in hotels than in their own homes

and they don't necessarily want room service for every meal. We have the convenience of Whole Foods across the street. We can stock their fridges with their favorite goodies before they arrive.

How important in the luxury space is it to have the kind of relationship the property does with Jean-Georges?

It's very important to have a food and beverage outlet that has a great atmosphere as well as great food. There is an expectation from travelers these days to have everything at their fingertips within the hotel. Many people like to entertain at the property, especially so in New York where traffic can get crazy. They want to be in a dining room that isn't stuffy but still has three Michelin-star rated food. For Jean-Georges to be so continuously highly rated over the past 18 years, despite the opening of so many new restaurants, is a credit to him and to the food and beverage team.

How do you define what a true luxury experience is about?

It has always been about personalized service for us. We embodied this from an early standpoint when we opened the property – we had to differentiate ourselves from the other properties. It's about making the stay personalized and learning about a guest's likes and dislikes so we can customize what they have during their stay. I stand in the lobby and listen to my front desk and bell staff, who know a lot about our guests and ask them about their families. Guests feel they're part of our family.

Has it become more challenging to make projections in this business?

It has become challenging because the booking window is so short. The important thing to look at are those areas that may be a bit slower and make sure there are some great promotions in place to get reservations on the books further out.

What has made the Trump experience here so special for you?

I just celebrated my 19-year anniversary recently so it has been a phenomenal experience for me to see the hotel come through all its transitions. We have evolved as a hotel collection because of the success of this property, and we now have a collection of fantastic hotels. Being able to work with the Trump family and be involved with every detail has been amazing. They want to hear my ideas and be the best hotel company out there. ●