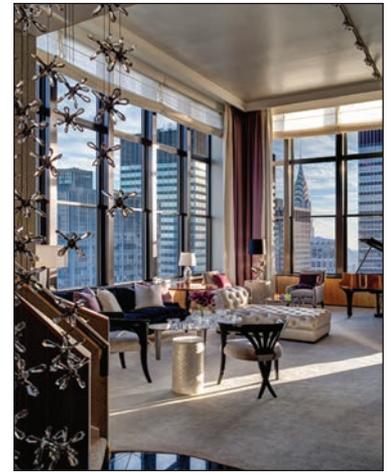




A Service Culture

An Interview with Becky Hubbard,
General Manager, Lotte New York Palace



The Grand Lobby (left); the living area of the Jewel Suite by Martin Katz (above); The Towers entrance lobby (below)

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to her current post, Becky Hubbard was Executive Assistant Manager at Trump SoHo Hotel; Assistant Rooms Executive at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company LLC; the Front House Director for The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company LLC; the Director of Reception for Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.; and Assistant Director of Reception for Sheraton. She received her Bachelor of Science in Hospitality from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.



Becky Hubbard

PROPERTY BRIEF Lotte New York Palace (lottenypalace.com), a legendary New York City luxury hotel, underwent a thorough transformation from a historic Madison Avenue gem to Midtown's premier modern hotel. The hotel features 909 spacious rooms and suites, including 176 exclusive Towers accommodations, which provide the perfect setting for relaxation and inspired stays in New York City. Unique dining venues such as Pomme Palais offer everything from imaginative breakfast dishes to signature pastries and sandwiches. Lotte New York Palace's collection of versatile meeting and event spaces is ideal for weddings, corporate events, and special occasions. The hotel's famed Villard Mansion, built in 1882, is recognized as a New York City landmark and gracefully blends with a contemporary 55-story tower. The Madison Avenue courtyard provides a dramatic entryway to the hotel's grand lobby.

Would you talk about the property today and how it has been transformed over the past few years?

I've been with the hotel for five years, and my team and I oversaw the \$140-million redesign, which put the hotel back on the map and gave it a new face-lift, and a reason to be talked about again. Lotte New York Palace will always be considered the most iconic luxury property on Madison Avenue, which caters to the most discerning of travelers from across the globe.

Our new ownership came in with a lot of love for this hotel from the start and they wanted us to excel. We could not have asked for better owners because, while they are a huge conglomerate in Korea, hotels are the face of their company.

We are their crown jewel in New York and their first entry into the U.S. hotel market. They are very proud of the accomplishments this hotel has had over the years and the people that work in it, and they want to maintain that.

When Lotte arrived, they made it very clear that this hotel and the people here are now part of the Lotte family. The company has a tradition of long-lasting employment. This mentality provides great motivation to our team for the future.

We put a great deal of focus on providing a five-star experience. When guests stay, they are getting the best service in New York City.

Providing the best product and facilities to our guests is of equal importance. We do a very thorough walk-through of our hotel to ensure that cleanliness and maintenance is impeccable. This impact is significant and tangible.



Are the owners happy with the product as it is today or are additional changes planned?

They are pleased with the guest room design and overall product. We have plans to update the restaurant concept and spa in some capacity in the future.

The restaurant and the spa are two main elements that bring a luxury component to our hotel and give it an all-inclusive resort-like feel in an urban setting. With our iconic courtyard, our location on Madison Avenue, and our uniquely branded triplex suites, one can stay with us and have it all in one place.

Is the messaging challenging when you are trying to reach such a broad market?

We create an experience that is unique to our individual guests. The Towers is pure luxury and in our eyes is an extension of our guests' homes and offices. Our hotel can accommodate a couple celebrating a special occasion or a group having a large gathering in one of our well-equipped meeting spaces.

Our guests are meant to sit back and enjoy time in New York and have everything taken care of for them.

How critical is having such a broad suite component to the success of the property?

Because we have such a broad offering, we attract many different people from leisure and business travelers to captains of industry, royalty, and celebrities. Guests aren't limited to just one type of suite. Our variety of suites provides an array of choices in space, layout, and views.

For the traveler who seeks something a bit more luxurious, we have a collection of suites able to accommodate various preferences.

Our Towers Corner Suites are equivalent to a penthouse suite in other hotels – the suites are spacious, have beautiful wood floors, lavish fixtures, and a separate pantry. Many guests feel it's like living in one's own apartment in New York.

Then there are the triplexes for those who want to feel like they have really made it in New York. When they are in the Jewel Suite by Martin Katz, sitting on the terrace overlooking the Chrysler Building, it feels like one is in Beverly Hills because of the decor, which has Martin Katz's signature on it.

The Champagne Suite is a bit more masculine so having a corporate dinner there or even an event on the outdoor terrace level offers an experience that no one else in New York can provide. The hot tubs on the terraces bring their experience to another level.

Having the variety of suites is the biggest attraction and, with 39 Tower Corner Suites, there is an incredible number to choose from.

How critical was it to have the staff understand the value in the change?

Change can be challenging for any organization. Yet, as a hotel we have always been focused on the core values of service. Lotte did not come in wanting to make a lot of change but rather to enhance those values. We have added more training and guidelines that our employees have been very receptive to and make them proud to work for this company. Lotte's theme is "touching the hearts of our guests" and that's what we do. ●