

Hospitality



Service Delivery

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



Living room of the Jewel Suite by Martin Katz (left); Villard courtyard (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to her current post, Becky Hubbard held the position of Hotel Manager at Lotte New York Palace and served in various executive roles at Trump SoHo Hotel; The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company LLC; Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.; and Sheraton. She received her Bachelor of Science in Hospitality from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.



PROPERTY BRIEF Lotte New York Palace (lottenypalace.com), a legendary New York City luxury hotel, underwent a thorough transformation from an 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 Villard offer a New American menu comprised of a "farm house breakfast fare." 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.

How has this year gone for the property and how challenging is it to drive rate today?

It has been challenging due to an increased supply of hotel rooms in New York. We have been rewarded this year with an increased number of groups and banquet events at the hotel. This type of business, whether repeat or new, helps us to drive rate. We feel as an independent hotel, we have a lot to offer and are confident in our service, which tends to be a positive factor and leads to an increased level of repeat business.

How do you personalize and customize the service at this size?

We have a great team with a vast level of experience and we all strive for excellence and to make sure our team continues

to be motivated, awarded, and trained continuously, so our standards stay top of mind. We encourage anticipation of guest needs, listening intently and, most importantly, build lasting and trusting relationships.

Do you feel the history and heritage of this property is well understood today?

With the opening of our restaurant, Villard, in the dramatic two-story Renaissance-style Gold Room, the most famous of the

Villard Mansion rooms, we have been able to promote its rich history to our guests. The space tells a story of its past residents and their style, and represents a very intriguing time period in New York City. In addition, the longevity of our ladies and gentlemen from the hotel add a personal element to the history as they have created memories for our guests and their families over the years.

How much of a differentiation is having The Towers?

The Towers at Lotte New York Palace is a separate and distinct entity that offers a five-star service and product, with 100 guest rooms and 76 lavish suites that vary in size and decor. We are most proud of our 39 Corner suites, which differentiate themselves from other hotel Presidential suites, with a spacious residential style floor plan and extensive views. Our branded Triplex suites – Jewel Suite by Martin Katz and The Champagne Suite – occupy the top three floors of the hotel, and they are the most imaginative and extraordinary spaces.

Will you touch on some of the specialty suites?

We have four Triplex suites, two of which were redesigned in 2013. We continue to speak about enhancing the other specialty suites due to the success of The Champagne and Jewel Suites. All of our suites have a unique character and offer something for everyone. We reserve them throughout the year for long-term stays, receptions, and filming, which is a great way of promoting them nationally and internationally to different clientele.

How important is it to have a restaurant again?

It is very important. Not only have our guests been extremely happy and positive but our partners in the travel industry, tour groups, and our corporate clientele were elated to see that breakfast was back. We have received great feedback regarding the magnificent farmhouse fare in a beautiful, historical setting. Whether someone is joining us to ease into the morning or for a power breakfast, the setting and food can accommodate both.

How is the lounge/social aspect evolving with Rarities?

Rarities design represents the original version of this space as it was in 1884. Guests are transported back in time with rare vintage wine and champagnes, pre-prohibition bottled spirits, and classic whiskeys.

We recently added a whisky flight to the menu, presented on a wooden board with three tastes. Many of the rare whiskeys we offer aren't being made anymore and connoisseurs can only find them here. The space accommodates private events as well, which offers a unique setting for a get-together.

Are travel agents still relevant today?

Travel agents offer personalized service and accommodate people's fast-paced lifestyles. We're all finding our days getting busier and sometimes people just need one person to take care of all aspects of travel, including flights and accommodations. It often helps to have travel agents who really know their customers as we will be able to anticipate needs and better serve the guest.

How valuable has it been to have owners who really want to invest in the property?

Lotte has vast experience when providing a five-star luxury experience. It was important to the company to continue the high standard that the brand is known for when acquiring their first hotel in North America. There are extensive plans to improve the service and offerings throughout the hotel, most recently with the opening of Villard restaurant. Future plans include the redesign of our spa and fitness center. With Lotte's vision, we expect many more improvements and continued success as the Lotte brand grows. Their investment into the building and its people has been invaluable. ●