

Hospitality



A Labor of Love

An Interview with Hank Freid,
Chief Executive Officer and Founder, Impulsive Group



The Sanctuary Hotel entrance (left); and lobby (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Hank Freid has been a real-estate powerhouse within New York City since 1976. Throughout his exceptional career, Freid has become a symbol of success, converting neglected buildings into thriving and respected hotels for over 30 years. Freid's legendary S.T.A.R. concierge service, Service Tailored to Any Request, has caught the attention of everyone from celebrities to CEOs alike.



Hank Freid

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 1996, the Impulsive Group (impulsivegroup.com) is a lifestyle hospitality company based in New York City and specializes in boutique hotel development and management, luxury yacht charters, and more. Other Impulsive Group properties include the Ameritania Hotel at 54th and Broadway, the Marrakech Hotel NYC on the Upper West Side, and a number of hotels also in Manhattan. Each Impulsive Group property holds its own distinctive flavor and nuance, yet represents the company's dedication to quality accommodations with distinctive, elegant decor, and superior customer service. From the Moroccan-themed Marrakech Hotel to the bespoke details of the Sanctuary Hotel, each piece of the Impulsive Group portfolio offers exquisite experiences at exceptional value. Customized destination packages are also available through the Impulsive Group Properties.

What was your vision for the Impulsive Group in the beginning?

I wanted to be my own boss. I had been working in an office job and longed to break out of the confines of the corporate world to establish something unique and special.

Has it changed significantly from when it was first developed?

In the beginning, I was working for independence. I didn't see the big picture and simply acquired properties that interested me. As my experience grew, so did my business. At first it was hotels, then restaurants, and finally yachts. The growth of the Impulsive Group developed from a labor of love.

Is building awareness around the Impulsive Group name important to you or is it more about the individual properties?

The Impulsive Group brand is synonymous with excellence in customer service across the board. Whether guests are in a four- or five-star hotel or a lower budget property, they can expect to receive impeccable hospitality. Ultimately, overall brand awareness helps each individual property succeed.

Do you see growth across your offerings?

Definitely. We offer affordable accommodations in New York City. New York is an expensive town and with the lack of competition from other properties offering the same price point, we are a diamond in the rough.

How do you position Sanctuary and is it challenging to be successful with so much supply?

I hire the best people and personally pick our employees because they are the people who care the most about whether a guest is happy and, at the end of the day, that's all that matters. This is reflected in our reviews from people from all over the world. Personal customer experience is the reason I have an edge over the competition.

As the growth comes, is it harder for you to be as involved in every aspect of the business?

Yes. Luckily, I have Brandon, my brilliant son and partner, who was born to run this business with me. He's inventive, creative, and excited about new projects. Of course, since he's my son, it helps that he knows exactly how I think.

Does growth come from opportunities that arise or do you plan the markets you want to be in?

Growth ultimately comes from opportunity, but we're always evaluating markets. Trusting one's gut is critical, because trying to create opportunity that isn't meant to be is not only frustrating but rarely manifests in the end. We were very close to purchasing another property in New York and then decided against it. We decided to try a new market and that served us.

We just purchased a new rooftop in Miami, which is going to be sensational. Miami is such a vibrant city and a perfect example of opportunity and market interest colliding. Another market filled with opportunities is Ibiza. It's a fabulous location with not enough four- and

five-star hotels. It's similar to what Miami was about 12 years ago, which is great for the hospitality industry.

Were the yacht clusters a natural extension?

I've always been inspired by the sea. It's vast and mysterious, and represents romance and adventure. My first boat was an 18-foot boat and after I acquired that, my fleet began to grow and I had the resources to charter people. What better way to translate my love for the hospitality industry and my fascination with the sea? Travel and adventure all wrapped into one.

How challenging is it to be successful in F&B in a city like New York?

There are so many wonderful restaurants in New York City, and that's why we took our time and were strategic about opening restaurants. It was my son Brandon's idea and I am grateful for his vision. People have always been drawn to star chefs so when he suggested we build the rooftop at the Sanctuary, we invited top restaurateurs to see if they were interested in the space. Everyone loved the location and the concept of a restaurant on top of our hotel. We had concerns though. Since our hotel guests are our top priority, we wanted to ensure that they would be treated as VIPs. Brandon suggested we open the restaurant on our own. It took some convincing, but he was right. The learning curve was steep and we made some mistakes but, ultimately, it paid off.

We then opened Tender, an upscale steak and sushi restaurant that focuses on a corporate clientele, and that has been tremendous for us.

Tender Lounge came next. The lounge is the cool sports bar you go to to watch the big game or catch up with friends. Many of our hotel guests grab a drink after a fun day of sightseeing.

We created three distinct venues for people whether they are guests of the hotel or not, without losing the integrity of our hotel.

Do you see yourself as a hotelier or as a real-estate executive?

I see myself as a hotelier but also as a businessman. I see everything as a business with a panache for the hotel business. I'm a detail-oriented person with a mind for business and a passion for hotels. Mostly, I see myself as lucky that I get to do what I love. ●