



## A Hidden Gem

An Interview with Vikram Sardana,  
General Manager, The Michelangelo Hotel



The Michelangelo Hotel exterior (below);  
and lobby (top left and right)

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Vikram Sardana has held his current post since January of 2016. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Johnson & Wales University and from the Institute of Hotel Management in India.*

**PROPERTY BRIEF** *In many ways, The Michelangelo Hotel (michelangelohotel.com) is the epitome of New York: a four-star grand master of a hotel on the corner of 51st Street and 7th Avenue in Manhattan. Like the city itself, the hotel is a tapestry of influences, wrapped up in authentic Italian elegance, chic style, and warm hospitality. It is this combination that distinguishes The Michelangelo from other four-star hotels in New York City. The Michelangelo is managed by Highgate, a premier hospitality investment and management company, whose growing portfolio includes more than 100 properties in gateway cities worldwide.*

**In New York City, how strong is the market today and is it challenging to find growth?**

With 8,000 rooms being added to the New York City market on an annual basis, this supply increase is the single biggest challenge facing all hoteliers.

**How hard is it to drive occupancy while keeping up rates?**

That can be a challenge depending on the season but it's imperative to find the balance between maintaining the product and relevance while keeping the rates competitive.

**Is it even more difficult today when booking windows are getting shorter?**

There are times when I'd advise people to hold off on booking but, with the supply in the market, we are noticing that people want to book immediately to get the best rate.

During summer months we can find compression but it's not too substantial. We saw hotels



Vikram Sardana

in Times Square with mid-week rates in the \$200 range. It's very similar to what the airline industry has become.

**How do you characterize The Michelangelo?**

Michelangelo is a true New York City gem. Steps from Broadway, Times Square, and the major corporate buildings on Sixth Avenue, as well as a short five-minute walk to Central Park, we offer the ideal location for both business and leisure travelers. Guests love our boutique feel, amazing service, and thoughtful amenities.

**From an accommodation point of view, is there a common feel throughout the property?**



The hotel offers everything needed for travelers of all types from business to families in a warm and luxurious atmosphere. Guests are always impressed by the size of the rooms and quality of the amenities.

**How challenging is the food and beverage part of the business?**

With the competitive market of New York City restaurants, I believe that only breakfast service will be left in hotels unless a property has a celebrity-chef driven restaurant or an exceptional lounge or rooftop bar experience.

**How do you offer the expected technology without losing the personal touch?**

We work to strike a balance between offering guests the ease and convenience of technology while maintaining our high-level of personalized service. The hospitality industry is still a 'people' business and we find our guests continue to visit for our friendly smile and warm welcome.

**How critical has it been to have such a strong relationship with your owners who are interested in the long term?**

It's one of the most important elements of a successful property. Along with our owners, we believe we have to continuously add value to our product to stay current and to ensure guests continue coming back.

**Do you still define your role as a hospitality role or is it more of a business role?**

It's a combination of both. Every day, we have to stay focused on service and profit – not service or profit. This balance makes for a great operator. We have to constantly reimagine the business to remain relevant within hospitality while also achieving our desired bottom line.

**Did you know early on that hospitality was where you wanted to be?**

Yes, I've always had a passion for travel and hospitality. I'm thrilled to be doing what I love at an exceptional hotel in one of the greatest cities in the world.

**How important is it for young people to get on-the-ground training?**

It's imperative. The daily challenges of running a hotel can't be experienced within a classroom; real-world experience is key. A good attitude and patience is also crucial to success in this industry. ●