



Team, Guests, Owners

An Interview with Ashish Verma,
Vice President Luxury Division for Dream Hotel Group
overseeing The Chatwal, New York



The Chatwal New York Mezzanine Bar (above);
Zen Suite private terrace (left); exterior (below)

EDITORS' NOTE Ashish Verma was previously with the Lowell Hotel in New York, where he served for seven years as General Manager. Prior to the Lowell, he served as General Manager at the famed Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans and has held senior positions with luxury hotel companies including Orient-Express Hotels, Millennium Hotels, Hyatt International Corporation and Oberoi Hotels International. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors in political science and economics from Punjab University in Chandigarh, India; a graduate degree in Hospitality Administration from the Oberoi School of Hotel Management in New Delhi, India; and a Master of Business Administration from IMHI Cornell-ESSEC in Paris, France.



Ashish Verma

PROPERTY BRIEF Located in the heart of Manhattan on 44th Street, The Chatwal, New York (thechatwalny.com) is one of the most centrally-located luxury boutique hotels. A landmark building by architect Stanford White, and designed by the famous Thierry Despont, this 76 guest rooms and suites (many with terraces) iconic jewel boasts numerous custom amenities, such as Georg Jensen designware, Christofle silverware, Bernardaud porcelain, Assouline books and Asprey amenities. All rooms are state of the art, with TOTO washlets, Intelity iPads, and custom Alpaca throws. The hotel offers Mercedes house car and butler services for all guests.

What have been the keys to The Chatwal's leadership in the market?

Team – Our dedicated team members are handpicked for not only their talent, but also for their passion, attitude and commitment. The successes of The Chatwal, New York are primarily attributed to my most amazing team. They inspire and wow me each day and consistently exceed my expectations.

Guests – Our loyal guests are like an extended family. The observations they share are a source of constant learning for us. Since they appreciate and feel connected to our caring for them, we are privileged that they spread the word about the joy they have received from the experiences that we have helped create to serve their wishes.

Owners – The trust, confidence and the autonomy extended to us by our ownership is a vital piece of the mix. Without that we would

not be able to make the tremendous changes and improvements that allow The Chatwal to remain a beacon among the finest luxury boutique properties in the world.

When you evaluate The Chatwal's competitive set, are you focused primarily on other hotels in your location or do you look at properties throughout the city?

Our competitive set comprises of comparable luxury properties around town from both uptown and downtown.

Will you highlight the strength of the suite offering at The Chatwal?

The themes we have created for our suites, and the fact that we have large terraces, are a big advantage. These are not mere balconies, but spacious terraces ranging from a minimum of 100 square feet to 1,200 square feet. The amenities, touches, details, views, styling and ambiance of our suites make our suites the most unique in New York.



Many hoteliers mention the challenges in regard to food and beverage in a competitive city such as New York. What are the keys for a hotel to be successful in food and beverage and would you highlight The Chatwal's offerings?

Credit for this goes to our Chairman, Mr. Sant Chatwal. He is visionary par excellence and has tremendous experience in successful food and

beverage operations. It is his experience, relationships and business acumen which makes our food and beverage operations what they are.

How much of a focus is wellness for The Chatwal and will you provide an overview of your spa facilities?

We look at this not just as an amenity or a feature but as a way of thinking. Wellness is an aspect we embody beyond the beautiful treatment rooms, a small pool, Jacuzzi, manicure-pedicure room and smart gym. We have partnered with Eddie Stern as our yoga and meditation guru. Also, we offer several opportunities to relax, unwind and recharge with technology thru apps and in-room iPads. Our entire team is very committed to wellness so, in real terms, wellness is an important part of our culture.

Is the property primarily focused on small, high-level meetings and how broad are The Chatwal's meeting and banquet capabilities?

While we do have a larger banquet space which can accommodate up to 120 guests and a more intimate one that can accommodate up to 45 guests, we focus on intimate groups, both on the social and corporate sides. We believe in personalized attention for large family getaways, board meetings, special occasions and celebrations. This is a natural draw for us with our location, features, amenities and services.

The Chatwal places a major focus on training its workforce and investing in its employees. How critical is this in retaining talent at the property?

How you prepare in peace is how you serve in war. Training is central and one of the most important aspects of our culture of excellence. We have our own Chatwal University program and also detailed SOPs, new hire orientation, consistent communications and an environment that supports constant growth and learning beginning with me; I am always learning and a lifelong student. So, training is constant.

What advice do you give to young people interested in building a career in the hotel industry?

Follow your heart. Don't consider what is trendy, or what the expectations of your peer group, family or the career officer at the college might be. Real fulfillment and joy is in what your purpose is.

That is higher and more satisfying than a label, title or a badge. Feel happy from within for what you choose – and you will have the right career choice. Hospitality should be such a choice. ●