



Creating Memories

An Interview with Keith M. Douglas,
Managing Director, One World Observatory



One World Observatory (left); Aspire event space (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Keith Douglas was named to his current post in 2017. Before joining One World Observatory, Douglas was the President and Managing Director at KD&CO after having served for 10 years as the Managing Director of Rockefeller Center and Top of the Rock Observation Deck for Tishman Speyer. He also spent over a decade as a senior executive responsible for overseeing sales, marketing and general managerial roles for several leading hotel franchises including W Hotels, Omni Hotels and Doubletree. Douglas is a graduate of the Johnson and Wales University, where he received his B.S. in hospitality management.



Keith M. Douglas

ORGANIZATION BRIEF One World Observatory (oneworldobservatory.com), located at the top of One World Trade Center, is the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere and offers unparalleled panoramic views of New York and three floors of immersive, interactive experiences.

Will you discuss the vision behind One World Observatory and how you define its purpose?

The purpose of One World Trade Center and One World Observatory are truly complementary. One World Trade Center is a beacon of resilience and hope that has grown into the central pillar of the new downtown. One World Observatory opened in May 2015, shortly after the building opened, and was purposely designed to ensure that the building was open and accessible to visitors from around the world.

From a tourism perspective, downtown Manhattan has an energized vibe, and the Observatory is an integral part of the tourism community and creates a reason for people from New York and around the world to visit us and discover everything that the new downtown has to offer.

One World Observatory has achieved strong global interest. How broad is its reach?

We welcome a global audience at One World, and we also have a very strong following from the local community. Oftentimes, we see locals bringing guests who are coming in

from out of town and we are proud to be the attraction of choice when exploring their home city.

It's really important to us that we have a very diverse group of associates working here to make sure that we can interact with our diverse population of visitors.

We are called One World and we want to make sure that we are always holding ourselves to a standard of being representative of the world population.

Has the programming at One World Observatory remained consistent?

The Observatory was designed to have the capability, using technology, to change, refresh and redesign the visitor journey as we grow and evolve with our guests.

The experiential components that exist today have served us extremely well in the first four years of operation, but we're now looking at the next generation and evolution of the visitor experience, so we want to utilize the technology we have to improve the operational efficiencies, as well as expand and enhance the visitor experience. We have a robust three-year plan we will begin to implement later this year that will change and evolve the guest experience through 2022.

What do you hope those who visit take with them from the One World experience?

Being in the hospitality business now for over 30 years, I think the one most important takeaway is creating a great memory for the visitor. A special moment that they will cherish and share with their friends and family when they go home. We want them to look back on their visit to One World Observatory and smile when they think about the great time they had when they were with us.

Those memories become embedded, not only because we have a really great product, but also because we have an incredible team who delivers on those human touch points throughout the visitor's journey.

One World Observatory just completed a record-setting year based on numbers of visitors. Are you able to take moments to reflect and celebrate this success or are you already focused on what is next?

For us, because we are in the hospitality business, we certainly want to celebrate the great moments that have happened

throughout the year. We also want to challenge ourselves to think about the evolution of our business and what we can do better and focus on making it even more memorable for our guests.

Will you highlight the food and beverage offerings and private event capabilities at One World Observatory?

We have a full-service lounge and restaurant, One Mix and One Dine. We also have a more casual café and bar, One Sip, where guests can enjoy their beverage of choice. Both the lounge and the restaurant are great amenities for tourists, but we also have a loyal local following, mostly from the tenants in the building, but also from around the World Trade Center Campus.

Aspire is our special event space located on the 102nd Floor. We can host cocktail receptions for up to 500 guests, as well as seated dinners and a variety of corporate events, such as product launches and holiday parties. For those looking for a unique, once-in-a-lifetime experience, we are a great wedding venue. Aspire is a completely customizable space that offers panoramic views of New York looking North, South and West. It is the absolute perfect location and provides a very local-centric opportunity for our clients to showcase the city.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in a career in the hospitality industry?

Try everything. In the hospitality world, we are in the unique position to explore our passions and there are so many opportunities to explore different areas of the business. Young people should begin their journey in operations. This could include guest services, food and beverage or retail, but any customer service area is a great way to start your career. Once you have the operational experience, there are ample opportunities in finance, human resources, culinary, IT, security, engineering, sales or marketing. Regardless of your role, it's important to fully focus on how you can deliver a memorable experience with each guest with every interaction. If you focus on creating a great guest experience, you are going to get noticed within your organization and there will be opportunities created for you to expand your purview within hospitality.

We only have one opportunity to make an amazing first impression in this business. ●