

## The Art of Personalization

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

**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

Our Specialty Suites are a curated collection of accommodations which are themed and provide each a tasteful and aesthetically distinct flavor yet with the underlining of the consistent design, quality, and comfort of The Chatwal. Large suite terraces with fireplaces, fountains, heat lamps, and even fire pits complimented with ample dining, lounging, and entertaining space make our suites really stand out, especially given their size and features.

They are a big differentiator, as we are not just adding a living room to a bedroom, but really adding a story to a stay for our guests with our extraordinary suites. Twenty-nine of our seventy-six accommodations are suites, so more than a third of our inventory is suites.

**How has The Chatwal, New York approached its food and beverage offering and what are the keys for a hotel to be successful in this area?**

Our Chairman, Mr. Sant Chatwal, has been the vision behind the success of many a

food and beverage ventures. Lambs Club at The Chatwal reopened with the famous Chef Michael White at its helm. Chef White has put together a fabulous menu which has enthralled our diners by keeping the history of Lambs Club intact while bringing his most admired and successful expertise to The Chatwal's food and beverage operations, whether at the restaurant and lounge or through room service.

**Will you highlight The Chatwal, New York's banquet and meeting capabilities?**

We have some of the most charming banquet and meeting rooms in New York City, like the Stanford White Room and the Club Rooms. The Stanford White room used to be a library of the thespian club that had occupied this building for about 100 years. It's library theme, with a working fireplace and a beautiful terrace, provides for an ideal space for intimate social events and celebrations as well as the most efficient and sophisticated meetings. The Club Rooms are themed as wine cellars, which they were historically. All meeting rooms have their own restrooms and coat checks. The banquet and events rooms even have their own separate kitchen.

**PROPERTY BRIEF** *Located in the heart of Manhattan on 44th Street, The Chatwal, New York (thecatwalny.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.*

**Will you provide an overview of The Chatwal, New York and how the property is positioned in the market?**

Our positioning is to provide the most unique, intimate, and memorable experiences available in boutique luxury hotels for our guests. We celebrate our enviable heart of Manhattan location which enables our guests to experience our great city like no other. And our services, amenities, and products are innovative, creative, and genuine.

**The Chatwal, New York has a strong suite product. Will you highlight this offering and do you see this as a differentiator for the property?**



Producer Suite living area



*The Chatwal, New York swimming pool*

So, the planned and carefully created meetings space make The Chatwal ideal for board stays, corporate retreats, weddings, and milestone celebrations. Charming accommodations to stay in and historic meeting rooms for events can all be found under one roof at The Chatwal, New York.

**Will you discuss The Chatwal, New York's focus on offering personalized service and a customized guest experience?**

Through butlers, the art of personalization is thriving at The Chatwal, one of only a very few offering this service. Each guest is treated as an individual and we study the purpose, hopes, and expectations of the travelers in order to create a quintessential memorable experience for them. Details and customizing is not just an aspiration, but the essence of The Chatwal.

**How critical is it for The Chatwal, New York to build a diverse and inclusive workforce to mirror the diversity of the guests it serves?**

Our great nation, our diverse city and our industry at large draws talent from all over the world and from all backgrounds. We celebrate the richness each team member brings to our team. Together, they are like a bouquet of flowers – each bringing their own distinct color, fragrance, and character to our team. Just like with an orchestra or a band which has many artists and various instruments, when they all play in harmony, to one sheet of music, under one baton, they

create unparalleled melodies to consistently enthrall our guests.

**How do you define the role of the general manager and what are the keys to being effective in the role?**

Serve the guests, serve the team, and serve the owners – that's it. Head Server of

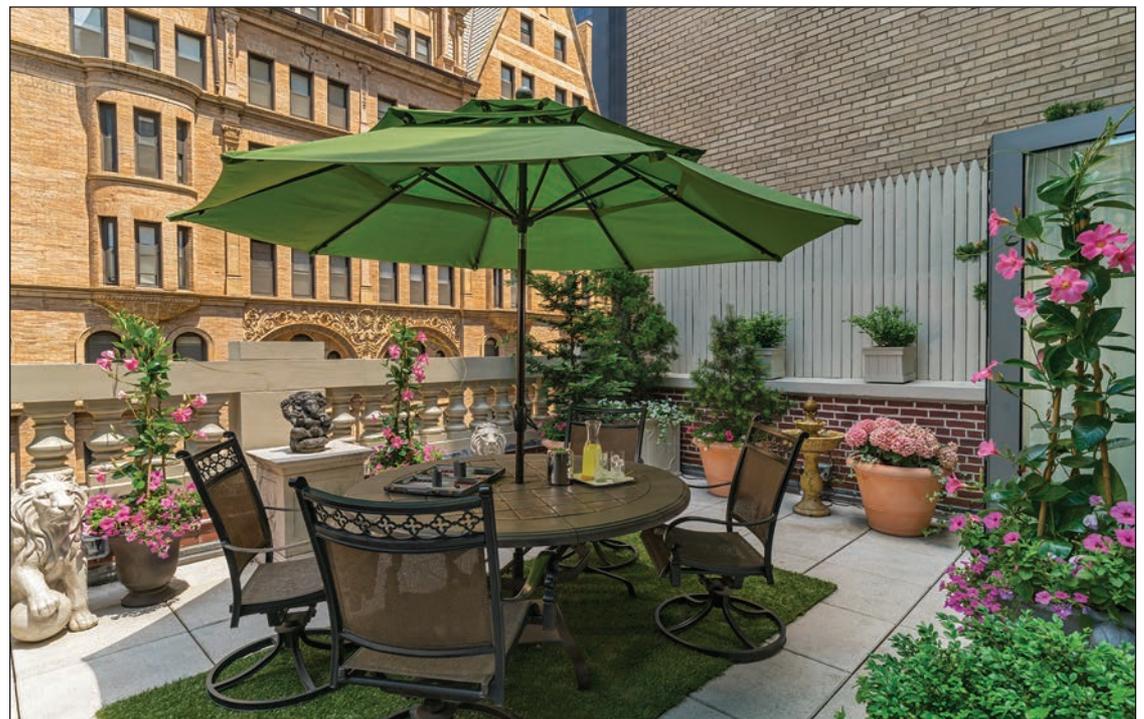
the hotel is the leader. The key to be effective, in my humble opinion, is uncompromising dedication to integrity and excellence.

**Did you always know that you wanted a career in the hotel industry and what has made the industry so special for you?**

No, my desire as an early teenager was to be a professional tennis player. Then in my late teens, I was thinking of joining the Army as an officer like my father. In undergraduate college, I studied economics and political science with an eye on a career in law or diplomacy. The hotel industry was never on my choice list until a distant cousin encouraged me to pursue it given my interest in cultures, languages, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. Once I joined the hospitality industry, I never looked back and subsequently earned a master's degree and an MBA specializing in it. I regard myself as fortunate to have joined this most exciting and fulfilling industry – won't even call it "industry" – it's really an extension of us as humans desiring to smile and serve like in any realm of life. What makes the business so special for me is ultimately the people – the team I work with, the guests we serve, and the owners who give me the respect and confidence to express myself.

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

There are no half measures. If you really want to build a career in the hospitality industry, give it your all and that really goes for any industry you choose for that matter. My advice to the young would be that a sincere commitment should be fundamental to your choice and then the results will take care of themselves. You will hopefully enjoy what you choose if your heart is completely in your profession. ●



*Sanctuary Suite private terrace*